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PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

WINTER, 1956

JOSEPH KERMAN
Mozart as Dramatist

MARY McCARTHY
The Will and Testament of Ibsen

J. F. POWERS
Dawn (a story)

SELMA FRAIBERG
Dream and Creation in Kafka

IRVING HOWE
Orwell as a Moderate Hero

F. W. DUPEE
The Yeats Letters

Poems by Dannie Abse, Leslie A. Fiedler, William Jay Smith, Wilfred Watson, and Richard Wilbur

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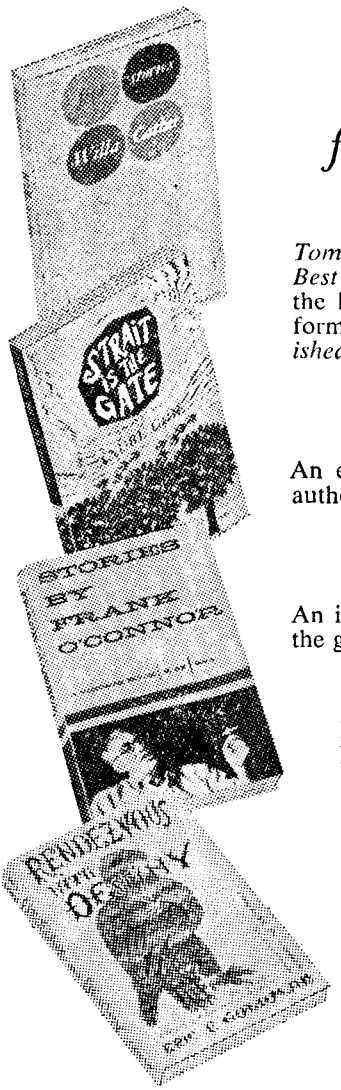

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WINTER, 1956 VOLUME XXIII, NUMBER 1

CONTENTS

DAWN, J. F. Powers 13
MOZART AS DRAMATIST, Joseph Kerman 23
ALTITUDES, Richard Wilbur 45
KAFKA AND THE DREAM, Selma Fraiberg 47
LINES: I PRAISE GOD'S MANKIND IN AN OLD WOMAN, Wilfred Watson 70
DUMB DICK, Leslie A. Fiedler 70
LETTER TO THE TIMES, Dannie Abse 71
DEATH OF A JAZZ MUSICIAN, William Jay Smith 73
THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF IBSEN, Mary McCarthy 74
PARIS LETTER, J. H. Goldsmith 81
JESTING AT SCARS, Stanley Edgar Hyman 91

BOOKS
FICTION CHRONICLE, Arthur Mizener 97
ORWELL AS A MODERATE HERO, Irving Howe 103
THE DEEDS AND DREAMS OF YEATS, F. W. Dupee 108
FREEDOM FOR WHAT?, Hans Meyerhoff 112
POETRY CHRONICLE, Edwin Honig 115
THE LONG ORDEAL, William V. Shannon 120
A PERSPECTIVE ON CRITICISM, Newton Arvin 124
PRAGMATIC RELIGIOSITY, Arthur A. Cohen 128
APOLLINAIRE AND GEORGE, Joseph Frank 131

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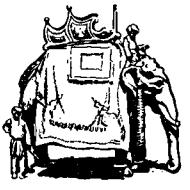

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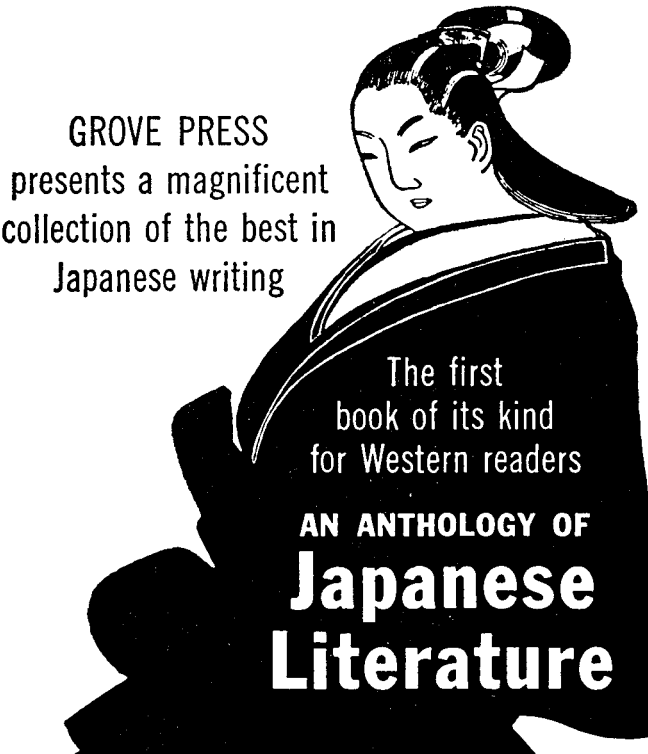

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J. F. Powers

DAWN

Father Udovic placed the envelope before the Archbishop and stepped back. He gave the Archbishop more than enough time to read what was written on the envelope, time to digest *The Pope* and, down in the corner, the *Personal,* and then he stepped forward. "It was in the collection yesterday," he said. "At Cathedral."

"Peter's Pence, Father?"

Father Udovic nodded. He'd checked that. It had been in with the special Peter's Pence envelopes, and not with the regular Sunday ones.

"Well, then . . ." The Archbishop's right hand opened over the envelope, then stopped, and came to roost again, uneasily, on the edge of the desk.

Father Udovic shifted a foot, popped a knuckle in his big toe. The envelope was a bad thing all right. They'd never received anything like it. The Archbishop was doing what Father Udovic had done when confronted by the envelope, thinking twice, which was what Monsignor Renton at Cathedral had done, and his curates before him, and his housekeeper who counted the collection. In the end, each had seen the envelope as a hot potato and passed it on. But the Archbishop couldn't do that. He didn't know *what* might be inside. Even Father Udovic, who had held it up to a strong light, didn't know. That was the hell of it.

The Archbishop continued to stare at the envelope. He still hadn't touched it.

"It beats me," said Father Udovic, moving backwards. He sank down on the leather sofa.

"Was there something else, Father?"

Father Udovic got up quickly and went out of the office—

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wondering how the Archbishop would handle the problem, disappointed that he evidently meant to handle it by himself. In a way, Father Udovic felt responsible. It had been his idea to popularize the age-old collection—"to personalize Peter's Pence"—by moving the day for it ahead a month so that the Archbishop, who was going to Rome, would be able to present the proceeds to the Holy Father personally. There had been opposition from the very first. Monsignor Renton, the rector at Cathedral, and one of those at table when Father Udovic proposed his plan, was ill-disposed to it (as he was to Father Udovic himself) and had almost killed it with his comment, "Smart promotion, Bruno." (Monsignor Renton's superior attitude was understandable. He'd had Father Udovic's job, that of chancellor of the diocese, years ago, under an earlier archbishop.) But Father Udovic had won out. The Archbishop had written a letter incorporating Father Udovic's idea. The plan had been poorly received in some rectories, which was to be expected since it disturbed the routine schedule of special collections. Father Udovic, however, had been confident that the people, properly appealed to, could do better than in the past with Peter's Pence. And the first returns, which had reached him that afternoon, were reassuring—whatever the envelope might be.

It was still on the Archbishop's desk the next day, off to one side, and it was there on the day after. On the following day, Thursday, it was in the "In" section of his file basket. On Friday it was still there, buried. Obviously the Archbishop was stumped.

On Saturday morning, however, it was back on the desk. Father Udovic, called in for consultation, had a feeling, a really satisfying feeling, that the Archbishop might have need of him. If so, he would be ready. He had a plan. He sat down on the sofa.

"It's about this," the Archbishop said, glancing down at the envelope before him. "I wonder if you can locate the sender."

"I'll do my best," said Father Udovic. He paused to consider whether it would be better just to go and do his best, or to present his plan of operation to the Archbishop for approval. But the Archbishop, not turning to him at all, was outlining what he wanted done. And it was Father Udovic's own plan! The Cathedral priests at their Sunday Masses should request the sender of the envelope to report

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to the sacristy afterwards. The sender should be assured that the contents would be turned over to the Holy Father, if possible.

"Providing, of course," said Father Udovic, standing and trying to get into the act, "it's not something. . . ."

"Providing it's possible to do so."

Father Udovic tried not to look sad. The Archbishop might express himself better, but he was saying nothing that hadn't occurred to Father Udovic first, days before. It was pretty discouraging.

He retreated to the outer office and went to work on a memo of their conversation. Drafting letters and announcements was the hardest part of his job for him. He tended to go astray without a memo, to take up with the tempting clichés that came to him in the act of composition and sometimes perverted the Archbishop's true meaning. Later that morning, he called Monsignor Renton and read him the product of many revisions, the two sentences.

"Okay," said Monsignor Renton. "I'll stick it in the bulletin. Thanks a lot."

As soon as Father Udovic hung up, he doubted that that was what the Archbishop wished. He consulted the memo. The Archbishop was very anxious that "not too much be made of this matter." Naturally Monsignor Renton wanted the item for his parish bulletin. He was hard up. At one time he had produced the best bulletin in the diocese, but now he was written out, quoting more and more from the magazines and even from the papal encyclicals. Father Udovic called Monsignor Renton back and asked that the announcement be kept out of print. It would be enough to read it once over lightly from the pulpit, using Father Udovic's version because it said enough without saying too much and was, he implied, authorized by the Archbishop. Whoever the announcement concerned would comprehend it. If published, the announcement would be subject to study and private interpretation. "Announcements from the pulpit are soon forgotten," Father Udovic said. "I mean—by the people they don't concern."

"You were right the first time, Bruno," said Monsignor Renton. He sounded sore.

The next day—Sunday—Father Udovic stayed home, expecting a call from Monsignor Renton, or possibly even a visit. There was

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nothing. That evening he called the Cathedral rectory and got one of the curates. Monsignor Renton wasn't expected in until very late. The curate had made the announcement at his two Masses, but no one had come to him about it. "Yes, Father, as you say, it's quite possible someone came to Monsignor about it. Probably he didn't consider it important enough to call you about."

"Not important!"

"Not important enough to call *you* about, Father. On *Sunday.*"

"I see," said Father Udovic mildly. It was good to know that the curate, after almost a year of listening to Monsignor Renton, was still respectful. Some of the men out in parishes said Father Udovic's job was a snap and maintained that he'd landed it only because he employed the touch system of typing. Before hanging up, Father Udovic stressed the importance of resolving the question of the envelope, but somehow (words played tricks on him) he sounded as though he were accusing the curate of indifference. What a change! The curate didn't take criticism very well, as became all too clear from his sullen silence, and he wasn't very loyal. When Father Udovic suggested that Monsignor Renton might have neglected to make the announcement at his Masses, the curate readily agreed. "Could've slipped his mind all right. I guess you know what that's like."

Early the next morning Father Udovic was in touch with Monsignor Renton, beginning significantly with a glowing report on the Peter's Pence collection, but the conversation languished, and finally he had to ask about the announcement.

"Nobody showed," Monsignor Renton said in an annoyed voice. "What d'ya want to do about it?"

"Nothing right now," said Father Udovic, and hung up. If there had been a failure in the line of communication, he thought he knew where it was.

The envelope had reposed on the Archbishop's desk over the weekend and through most of Monday. But that afternoon Father Udovic, on one of his appearances in the Archbishop's office, noticed that it was gone. As soon as the Archbishop left for the day, Father Udovic rushed in, looking first in the wastebasket, then among the sealed outgoing letters, for a moment actually expecting to see a fat one addressed in the Archbishop's hand to the Apostolic Delegate. When he uncovered the envelope in the "Out" section of the file

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basket, he wondered at himself for looking in the other places first. The envelope had to be filed somewhere—a separate folder would be best—but Father Udovic didn't file it. He carried it to his desk. There, sitting down to it in the gloom of the outer office, weighing, feeling, smelling the envelope, he succumbed entirely to his first fears. He remembered the parable of the cockle. "An enemy hath done this." An enemy was plotting to disturb the peace of the diocese, to employ the Archbishop as an agent against himself, or against some other innocent person, some unsuspecting priest or nun . . . yes, against Father Udovic. Why him? Why not? Only a diseased mind would contemplate such a scheme, Father Udovic thought, but that didn't make it less likely. And the sender, whoever he was, doubtless anonymous and judging others by himself, would assume that the envelope had already been opened and that the announcement was calculated to catch him. Such a person would never come forward.

Father Udovic's fingers tightened on the envelope. He could rip it open, but he wouldn't. That evening, enjoying instant coffee in his room, he could steam it open. But he wouldn't. In the beginning, the envelope might have been opened. It would have been so easy, pardonable then. Monsignor Renton's housekeeper might have done it. With the Archbishop honoring the name on the envelope and the intentions of whoever wrote it, up to a point anyway, there was now a principle operating that just couldn't be bucked. Monsignor Renton could have it his way.

That evening Father Udovic called him and asked that the announcement appear in the bulletin.

"Okay. I'll stick it in. It wouldn't surprise me if we got some action now."

"I hope so," said Father Udovic, utterly convinced that Monsignor Renton had failed him before. "Do you mind taking it down verbatim this time?"

"Not at all."

In the next bulletin, an advance copy of which came to Father Udovic through the courtesy of Monsignor Renton, the announcement appeared in an expanded, unauthorized version.

The result on Sunday was no different.

During the following week, Father Udovic considered the possi-

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bility that the sender was a floater and thought of having the announcement broadcast from every pulpit in the diocese. He would need the Archbishop's permission for that, though, and he didn't dare to ask for something he probably wouldn't get. The Archbishop had instructed him not to make too much of the matter. The sender would have to be found at Cathedral, or not at all. If not at all, Father Udovic, having done his best, would understand that he wasn't supposed to know any more about the envelope than he did. He would file it away, and some other chancellor, some other archbishop, perhaps, would inherit it. The envelope was most likely harmless anyway, but Father Udovic wasn't so much relieved as bored by the probability that some poor soul was trusting the Archbishop to put the envelope into the hands of the Holy Father, hoping for rosary beads blessed by him, or for his autographed picture, and enclosing a small offering, perhaps a spiritual bouquet. Toward the end of the week, Father Udovic told the Archbishop that he liked to think that the envelope contained a spiritual bouquet from a little child, and that its contents had already been delivered, so to speak, its prayers and communions already credited to the Holy Father's account in heaven.

"I must say I hadn't thought of that," said the Archbishop.

Unfortunately for his peace of mind Father Udovic wasn't always able to believe that the sender was a little child.

The most persistent of those coming to him in reverie was a middle-aged woman saying she hadn't received a special Peter's Pence envelope, had been out of town a few weeks, and so hadn't heard or read the announcement. When Father Udovic tried her on the meaning of the *"Personal"* on the envelope, however, the woman just went away, and so did all the other suspects under questioning—except one. This was a rich old man suffering from scrupulosity. He wanted his alms to be in secret, as it said in Scripture, lest he be deprived of his eternal reward, but not *entirely* in secret. That was as far as Father Udovic could figure the old man. Who was he? An audacious old Protestant who hated communism, or could some future Knight of St. Gregory be taking his first awkward step? The old man was pretty hard to believe in, and the handwriting on the envelope sometimes struck Father Udovic as that of a woman. This wasn't necessarily bad. Women controlled the nation's wealth. He'd seen the figures on

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it. The explanation was simple: widows. Perhaps they hadn't taken the right tone in the announcement. Father Udovic's version had been safe and cold, Monsignor Renton's like a summons. It might have been emphasized that the Archbishop, under certain circumstances, would *gladly* undertake to deliver the envelope. That might have made a difference. The sender would not only have to appreciate the difficulty of the Archbishop's position, but abandon his own. That wouldn't be easy for the sort of person Father Udovic had in mind. He had a feeling that it wasn't going to happen. The Archbishop would leave for Rome on the following Tuesday. So time was running out. The envelope could contain a check—quite the cruellest thought —on which payment would be stopped after a limited time by the donor, whom Father Udovic persistently saw as an old person not to be dictated to, or it could be nullified even sooner by untimely death. God, what a shame! In Rome, where the needs of the world, temporal as well as spiritual, were so well known, the Archbishop would've been welcome as the flowers in May.

And then, having come full circle, Father Udovic would be hard on himself for dreaming and see the envelope as a whited sepulchre concealing all manner of filth, spelled out in letters snipped from newsprint and calculated to shake Rome's faith in him. It was then that he particularly liked to think of the sender as a little child. But soon the middle-aged woman would be back, and all the others among whom the hottest suspect was a feeble-minded nun—devils all to pester him, and the last was always worse than the first. For he always ended up with the old man—and what if there was such an old man?

On Saturday, Father Udovic called Monsignor Renton and asked him to run the announcement again. It was all they could do, he said, and admitted that he had little hope of success.

"Don't let it throw you, Bruno. It's always darkest before dawn."

Father Udovic said he no longer cared. He said he liked to think that the envelope contained a spiritual bouquet from a little child, that its contents had already been delivered, its prayers and communions already . . .

"You should've been a nun, Bruno."

"Not sure I know what you mean," Father Udovic said, and hung up. He wished it were in his power to do something about

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Monsignor Renton. Some of the old ones got funny when they stayed too long in one place.

On Sunday, after the eight o'clock Mass, Father Udovic received a call from Monsignor Renton. "I told 'em if somebody didn't own up to the envelope, we'd open it. I guess I got carried away." But it had worked. Monsignor Renton had just talked with the party responsible for the envelope—a Mrs. Anton— and she was on the way over to see Father Udovic.

"A woman, huh?"

"A widow. That's about all I know about her."

"A widow, huh? Did she say what was in it?"

"I'm afraid it's not what you thought, Bruno. It's money."

Father Udovic returned to the front parlor where he had left Mrs. Anton. "The Archbishop'll see you," he said, and sat down. She wasn't making a good impression on him. She could've used a shave. When she'd asked for the Archbishop, Father Udovic had replied instinctively, "He's busy," but it hadn't convinced her. She had appeared quite capable of walking out on him. He invoked the Archbishop's name again. "Now one of the things the Archbishop'll want to know is why you didn't show up before this."

Mrs. Anton gazed at him, then past him, as she had earlier when he'd tried to question her. He saw her starting to get up, and thought he was about to lose her. He hadn't heard the Archbishop enter the room.

The Archbishop waved Mrs. Anton down, seated himself near the doorway at some distance from them, and motioned to Father Udovic to continue.

To the Archbishop it might sound like browbeating, but Father Udovic meant to go on being firm with Mrs. Anton. He hadn't forgotten that she'd responded to Monsignor Renton's threats. "Why'd you wait so long? You listen to the Sunday announcements, don't you?" If she persisted in ignoring him, she could make him look bad, of course, but he didn't look for her to do that, with the Archbishop present.

Calmly Mrs. Anton spoke, but not to Father Udovic: "Call off your trip?"

The Archbishop shook his head.

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In Father Udovic's opinion, it was one of his functions to protect the Archbishop from directness of that sort. "How do we know what's in here?" he demanded. Here, unfortunately, he reached up the wrong sleeve of his cassock for the envelope. Then he had it. "What's in here? Money? How much?" He knew from Monsignor Renton that the envelope contained money, but he hadn't told the Archbishop, and so it probably sounded rash to him. Father Udovic could feel the Archbishop disapproving of him, and Mrs. Anton still hadn't answered the question.

"Maybe you should return the envelope to Mrs. Anton, Father," said the Archbishop.

That did it for Mrs. Anton. "It's got a dollar in it," she said.

Father Udovic glanced at the Archbishop. The Archbishop was adjusting his cuffs. This was something he did at funerals and public gatherings. It meant that things had gone on too long. Father Udovic's fingers were sticking to the envelope. He still couldn't believe it. "Feels like there's more than that," he said.

"I wrapped it up good in paper."

"You didn't write a letter or anything?"

"Was I supposed to?"

Father Udovic came down on her. "You were supposed to do what everybody else did. You were supposed to use the envelopes we had printed up for the purpose." He went back a few steps in his mind. "You told Monsignor Renton what was in the envelope?"

"Yes."

"Did you tell him how much?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"*He* didn't ask me."

And *he* didn't have to, thought Father Udovic. One look at Mrs. Anton and Monsignor Renton would know. Parish priests got to know such things. They were like weight-guessers for whom it was only a question of ounces. Monsignor Renton shouldn't have passed Mrs. Anton on. He had opposed the plan to personalize Peter's Pence, but who would have thought he'd go to such lengths to get even with Father Udovic? It was sabotage. Father Udovic held out the envelope and pointed to the *Personal* on it. "What do you mean by that?" Here was where the creatures of his dreams had always gone away. He leaned forward for the answer.

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Mrs. Anton leaned forward to give it. "I mean I don't want somebody else takin' all the credit with the Holy Father!"

Father Udovic sank back. It had been bad before, when she'd ignored him, but now it was worse. She was attacking the Archbishop. If there were only a way to *prove* she was out of her mind, if only she'd say something that would make all her remarks acceptable in retrospect . . . "How's the Holy Father gonna know who this dollar came from if you didn't write anything?"

"I wrote my name and address on it. In ink."

"All right, Father," said the Archbishop. He stood up and almost went out of the room before he stopped and looked back at Mrs. Anton. "Why don't you send it by regular mail?"

"He'd never see it! That's why! Some flunky'd get hold of it! Same as here! Oh, don't I know!"

The Archbishop walked out, leaving them together—with the envelope.

In the next few moments, although Father Udovic knew he had an obligation to instruct Mrs. Anton, and had the text for it—"When thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee"— he despaired. He realized that they had needed each other to arrive at their sorry state. It seemed to him, sitting there saying nothing, that they saw each other as two people who'd sinned together on earth might see each other in hell, unchastened even then, only blaming each other for what had happened.

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Joseph Kerman

MOZART AS DRAMATIST

(On the occasion of the bicentennial of his birth)

The dramatic potential and accomplishment of opera are hardly appreciated today. While the traditional ideal of *dramma per musica* continues to animate many good composers and many intellectuals, it does not much interest the intelligent theater-going public. Mainly, I believe, because so many worthless, undramatic works are presented on exactly the same plane as the greatest masterpieces, to the same applause by the connoisseurs, and with the same critical sanction. Nine-tenths of the current repertory may be *Kitsch*; but this should not be allowed to mask the genuine art. Or as H. D. F. Kitto has put it, "It would be possible to exhume hundreds of operas quite devoid of drama, but though they may be easily in the majority, they do not prove that Opera is undramatic. The best operas *are* dramatic; the failures are no evidence at all." Further misunderstanding comes from the parochialism inherent in many people's opinion of what constitutes the dramatic. A broad imaginative view (such as may be natural to the student of Aeschylus) is necessary to comprehend opera, or for that matter any other highly conventionalized dramatic form. Musical drama will not indeed submit to the principles of the modern naturalistic theater.

But for all the confusion, there is one reassurance: Mozartian comedy. Mozart, we feel, is a genuine dramatist, even if the other great opera composers seem to fall short. To an extent, perhaps, this feeling is only an extension of our general devotion to Mozart—a strong, rather remarkable feature of contemporary taste, uniting musicians and amateurs of the most diverse tendencies. It is now two hundred years since he was born; one wonders whether any striking new evaluation will emerge from the mass of festivals, appreciations,

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and monographs which the anniversary must promote. Will someone perhaps trigger a reaction against Mozart—as Professor Edward J. Dent, a famous Mozartian, tried to do with Beethoven in 1927? But Mozart is less shadowed with misapprehensions and sentimentalities than Beethoven, even to the present day. His prestige as a dramatist, in particular, can only be enhanced by a serious analysis of his operas from a contemporary point of view. As always, the hope is to deepen our understanding of the artist's virtues, at the same time as we recognize his limitations and failures more frankly.

Ordinary opinion is not wrong to regard *The Marriage of Figaro* as Mozart's first great opera. It is the first opera of his maturity. *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* are beautiful works, and it is with some pain that I pass them by, but neither of them can be called fully developed products of Mozart's imagination—no more so than beautiful early instrumental compositions like the Violin Concertos, the Divertimento-Sextet in D, and the B-flat and "Haffner" Symphonies. Though Mozart's phenomenal sensitivity was very early in evidence, his vision and his sorrow did not grow to meet it until after 1782. He first took full artistic responsibility in the six great Quartets dedicated to Haydn, the unfinished Mass in c-minor, the Viennese Piano Concertos, and then in *Figaro*. The emotional maturity reflected in these works came evidently out of several crucial events of a few years earlier: Mozart's escape from Salzburg to independence and struggle in Vienna, his rupture with his father, and especially his marriage to Constanze Weber. In this new atmosphere Mozart faced up to Haydn and Bach, and found his own certain, complete voice. Vienna also meant a widening of intellectual horizons. In *Figaro,* for the first time, Mozart addressed himself to a dramatic problem with full insight and understanding.

For Mozart, *Figaro* was also an initiation in theatrical sophistication. He was working with Lorenzo da Ponte, not with a Varesco or a Stephanie. An operatic version of *Le Barbier de Séville* had just made a success in Vienna—a bright, innocent play, innocently composed by Giovanni Paisiello, who was a leading *opera buffa* composer of the day. But Beaumarchais' sequel *Le Mariage de Figaro* was politically and morally so suspect that it could not be staged at

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all without the sugar-coat of music. *Opera buffa* was gingerly turning towards adult themes, libertarianism, genuine wit, and humanity; Mozart and Da Ponte must have half-realized that they were creating living comedy out of the traditional simple farce of Pergolesi, Piccini, and Paisiello. Goldoni had done something similar with the *commedia dell' arte*. Everything about *Figaro* is exceptional, advanced, brilliant, alarmingly real; it was much too clever to succeed in Vienna. Mozart's sense of cleverness, power, and exhilaration remains an actual aesthetic quality of the piece, one that will always fascinate the connoisseur. Most recently, Siegmund Levarie has performed an exhaustively wrong-headed analysis of the opera, glorifying its every musical detail; the principal glory of *Figaro,* however, is the central drama which binds the details.

Writing *Figaro,* Mozart first grasped the dramatic force of the ensemble, and more generally, the dramatic possibilities of the Classic musical style. In a word, he found his characteristic dramatic stride. The way Mozart transformed the rather simple-minded technique of the *opera buffa* is absolutely astonishing; Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*—one of Mozart's models—may stand as a superior example of the genre, but its dramaturgy seems childish next to that of *Figaro.* The dramatic strength of *Figaro* stems directly out of Mozart's realization of values latent in the Italian comic-opera style. This fact is clearest of all from the opera's resolution, the reconciliation between the Count and Countess before the final curtain.

Mozart built this into a large Finale; so would any other composer, but no other would have turned the peculiarities of the form to so trenchant a dramatic end. In this Finale, complexity of plot becomes almost painful, and is heightened by complexity of musical structure: the sections flow into one another with elaborate musical conflicts, parodies, and asides, rapidly developing the action on various planes within the musical continuity. The intensity of intrigue is matched to the intensity of musical feeling. Even the décor is strained: the darkness, the summer-houses where everybody hides, the sardonic formality of the rococo garden. Count Almaviva, who has made an assignation with the maid Susanna, makes love to his own wife dressed in the maid's clothes; Figaro pretends to make love to "the Countess," actually his Susanna in disguise. When the Count overhears this last manoeuvre (*"Ah, senz' arme son io!"*), he

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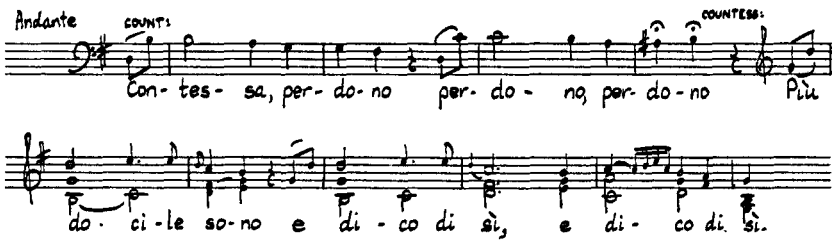
summons torches and prepares a scene of public humiliation. Susanna (for the Countess) acts out a frantic plea for mercy, as do Figaro and the assembled courtiers, but the Count is adamant—until the real Countess returns and throws aside her disguise: "Perhaps my entreaties may prevail." At once the turn in the action is reflected: an abrupt change to the minor mode, a tense rhythm, whispers, a nervous staccato scale-figure in the violins, a newly serious harmonic progression. This brief section changes the mood drastically to prepare for an even greater modulation as the Count begs and gains forgiveness from the Countess. The new section is *andante,* with an altogether unprecedented stillness and simplicity, half hymn-like, without Mozart's ordinary glitter:

The complexity of the Finale prior to this moment has been criticized as excessive. But the point is surely that its very excruciation plays wonderfully into the serenity of the resolution; the musical technique itself emphasizes the essential articulation of the plot. The plot in turn illuminates the characters by its dénouement. This is a moment of realization, almost an epiphany, for the Count, who shows an unsuspected capacity for contrition, with none of the breast-beating of the mock-pleas by Figaro and Susanna a moment before. The Countess has never been more lovely and true to herself, less caught in the artificialities of her existence. Even the Basilios and Cherubinos are touched. And the characters themselves illuminate the central dramatic idea: the scene uncovers a core of decency under all the shabbiness which the comedy has exposed and tried to rationalize in laughter. All this is possible because *musically* it is a climax, because the music at this section has a deeper seriousness and a new clarity of feeling. Yet what effect would the section make out of its context? It depends on the rest of the Finale, with its striving

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hilarity, and grows inevitably out of it, and yet transcends it completely. Mozart here foreshadows the later vision of *The Magic Flute*.

Figaro would be a lesser work if this sublime note were introduced at the end without prior warning or articulation. Actually strands tending to it have appeared all through the piece.[1] Act I is devoted to comic intrigue, but the first appearance of the Countess, at the start of Act II, moves the drama to a new plane. Living in the world of comedy, she wears the mask of the court for conversation and intrigue; but in soliloquies we see the real woman, and the court sees her too, when she unmasks at the final reconciliation. This reconciliation has been gracefully prepared by another: in Act III, when Don Bartolo and Marcellina discover that Figaro is their long-lost bastard, and happily get married at last. Thanks to Beaumarchais' sense of burlesque, it is a hilarious moment; thanks to Mozart's music it is also a strangely beautiful one, suggesting a new serenity to human relationships. The Sextet here opens up a significant sub-plot by showing signs of friction in the little love-nest of Figaro and Susanna. Their misunderstandings do more than provide extra comic situations; they force us to contrast Figaro-Susanna and the Count-Countess in the entire complex of love, desertion, jealousy, suspicion, and forgiveness. With the servants, the causes for jealousy are only imaginary, and their feelings are more or less trivial: Susanna slaps Figaro (twice), and he generalizes anger at her "betrayal" into a conventional diatribe against womanhood, *"Aprite un po' quegli occhi."* Their reconciliation is correspondingly superficial: they are safely behind their *commedia dell' arte* masks when all is forgiven in a charming duet, *"Pace, pace, mio dolce tesoro."* But with the masters, though there certainly has been betrayal, the Countess reveals poignant grief instead of jealousy. His fury when his schemes are thwarted, and especially when he thinks her unfaithful, is intense and extremely unpleasant; Almaviva is Mozart's most savage creation. Yet in spite of injury and high feelings, their reconciliation is deep and true, the most beautiful thing in the opera. They are able to meet on terms that we had not dreamed were still available to them. The doors of Wisdom, Virtue, and Love are not far away.

1 See, for a little more detail, "Marriages in *Figaro*," *Opera News* XVIII, December 21, 1953.

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Beaumarchais' play had social significance in its day, and Mozart's opera too, it is said, sets forth a cunning criticism of the *ancien régime* in its exaltation of the servant classes. But surely Mozart intended nobility of station as the clear symbol for nobility of spirit; the court may smirk, but the Count and Countess interest us more profoundly than any court intrigues. She is not strong, he is not good, and even their servants can show them up as pathetic or ludicrous—with the help of Mozart's and Da Ponte's instinct for comedy. But the Count and Countess are conscious; they feel their feelings through, and there is a ground of sympathy between them which Figaro and Susanna cannot ever comprehend. Cruelty and shame have their place in Mozart's picture of human fallibility; particularly in this context, his drama reveals a view of life that is realistic, unsentimental, optimistic, and humane. Probably no one has left a performance of *Figaro* without reflecting that the Count will soon be philandering again. But just as surely there will be another reconciliation, another renewal as genuine on both sides, as contrite and as beautiful. Clever Figaro and Susanna are not actually so secure.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the drama of *Figaro* is Mozart's, not Beaumarchais' or Da Ponte's. Music here does not merely decorate what playwright or librettist had designed; Mozart's music creates a drama that they never suspected. In his serious treatment of the Countess, Mozart transcends anything in Da Ponte's verse or in operatic tradition as he knew it; and with the Count, Cherubino, and Susanna he performed famous miracles of characterization (I have not said much about this, only because I believe that it is better understood than Mozart's central dramatic idea). Then at the reconciliation between Bartolo and Marcellina, Mozart actually departed from Da Ponte and Beaumarchais, rather than simply expanding on them. The original Bartolo chafes at the awkward turn of events, and this feeling is even left in Mozart's recitative; but in opera we trust what is musically forceful, and Bartolo's tender joy in the Sextet is instantly, unshakeably convincing. Most crucial, of course, is Mozart's transformation of the ending of the play. With Beaumarchais, the reconciliation is nothing—worse than nothing, it suggests fatally that the intricate plot had beaten the author, and that clemency was the only way he saw to unravel it. As

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for Da Ponte, here is a close enough translation of his libretto at this point:

COUNT: *Forgive me, Countess!*
COUNTESS: *I am more gentle*
And answer you "yes."
ALL: *We all are delighted*
To have it end thus.

With this miserable material before him, Mozart built a revelation, and saw how it could be supported by other elements in Beaumarchais's scaffolding. In opera, the dramatist is the composer.

The success of *Figaro* was compounded of genius, skill, ingenuity, good luck, and time. The last two of these ingredients were lacking for Mozart's next two operas; neither *Don Giovanni* nor *Così fan tutte* has the dramatic consistency and force of *Figaro* or the later *Magic Flute*. In fact, the two middle operas present an object lesson in the range of frustration that librettos can cause a composer. Da Ponte was of course a superior librettist, and his collaboration with Mozart was enormously fortunate, whatever went wrong. But the trouble as I guess was that he was too confident and facile and famous a writer for Mozart to control, as he was later to control Emanuel Schikaneder in *The Magic Flute*. In any case the libretto for *Don Giovanni* was not well enough written, and that for *Così fan tutte* was too well written. Mozart was equally at a loss.

Even the most devoted Mozartian will have to admit that there is something unsatisfactory about *Così fan tutte*. Certainly it is Mozart's most problematic opera, a fact reflected by the curious history of the critical attitude towards the story. Romantic critics considered it outrageous, improbable, immoral, frivolous, unworthy of Mozart; the last two charges are true enough, and will not be evaporated by our pious horror, today, at the naive remedies attempted in the nineteenth century—such as adapting the music to a French version of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Today we insist on our works of art just as they were originally presented; Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto must remain, and it must be rationalized too. This is always done with an air of injured ease, but I have never seen an explanation of any

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"convention" that makes sense both of the action, on whatever level or levels, and also of the remarkable expressivity of some of the music. Nothing is settled by concluding that Da Ponte gave Mozart a frivolous book, whereupon Mozart took parts of it seriously, and on them lavished beautiful music. You can say the same of *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*; the real question is, what is the result of this strange blend? The artistic nature and the degree of success of the two earlier operas are quite different from those of *Così fan tutte*.

Most fundamentally, its plane of reality differs from that of *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* on the one hand, and that of *The Magic Flute* on the other. Mozart and Da Ponte had unresolved differences about it; the confusion is in the piece as well as in the minds of the audience. Professor Dent, in his admirable, basic book *Mozart's Operas,* does not dispel confusion by asserting that the four lovers are puppets expressing an amazingly wide range of emotions. They are certainly silly, dear children, and easily led by the nose, but their actions and feelings are logical, true, and dramatically arresting; this would seem enough for us to grant them the courtesy of the usual metaphor and consider them "real people" rather than marionettes. "Don Alfonso so obviously pulls all the strings that one begins to wonder if he is not really Don Lorenzo or Don Wolfgango." It is important, though, to distinguish the roles of these three manipulators.

Don Alfonso is the clearest of them, and the least aware of any essential problems. He explains his attitude unmistakably when he recites an *ottava* to the boys as a moral sentence, near the end. This piece comes as close to an aria as anything that Don Alfonso sings and incorporates the title of our opera, together with music that had already figured in the Overture:

Everyone censures women; I excuse them
If every minute fresh love seems to start.
Some say it's habit, others vice; say I—
The necessary instinct of the heart.
Deluded lover, do not place the blame
On someone else's, but on your own part;
For women young and old, and fair and foul
(Now come repeat with me) THUS DO THEY ALL!

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Mutability is a *"necessità del core."* Alfonso does not deny feeling or oppose it; he wishes to show only that it does not last. So he does and wins his bets, though it is not clear that anything else has been gained.

Don Lorenzo's task was to pull this play-within-a-play into a total drama. There is really no question that his libretto is technically first-rate, the intrigue smooth and elegant, the construction masterly, the verse delightful. It begins with an amusing picture of the silly lovers exhibiting sentiments demanded by convention: the two girls going into raptures over locket-portraits, the boys demanding satisfaction when Don Alfonso doubts feminine fidelity. This satisfaction is a bet that the girls will succumb to the charms of the boys absurdly disguised as Albanians, under strict orders of Alfonso. For some time, conventional refusals meet conventional love-making by the Albanians; but then, one after another, the girls capitulate. It is of course the asymmetries in this highly symmetrical plot that provide the dramatic drive. Dorabella falls at once, but Fiordiligi puts up an unexpected struggle, around which the second act comes to revolve. Da Ponte arranged different reactions from the boys, too, when they learn of their betrayals: Guglielmo spiteful, Ferrando emotional and hurt. Then at the end the masquerade is revealed to the girls, and with much embarrassment they return to their original lovers. The pairing-off at the end is not specified, but it seems quite clear that the original *status quo* is to stand.[2]

The thing is watertight—and that's what caused Mozart trouble. Only a prude will object to people's changing their feelings, in whatever possible frame of reality (though it may seem odd that the boys remain faithful while the girls waver). Only a pedant will object to the compression of the action into a single day, or to the fact that the girls do not recognize the Albanians (why should they have

2 Three reasons: first, a remark of Alfonso's as he tells the boys to marry the girls in spite of their fickleness: "Basically you love them still, your plucked chicks"—"In fondo voi le amate, queste vostre cornacchie spennacchiate"—and the boys ruefully agree. Second, returning to the original lovers is the "correct" thing; since everybody acts on convention, until pressed, any wrench from the usual would have to elicit some explanation. Third, the second switch is dramatically necessary; otherwise the whole Finale lacks point—it must do more than just tease the girls, it must in fact teach them a lesson reflected by action. And very funny it is, at the end, when the girls swear eternal fidelity just as they had at their first appearance, in Act I, scene 3.

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known the other boys well at all, or, for that matter, even their own lovers?). It is even pompous to complain of the implied psychology, because the play is firmly posited on the view that emotion is essentially trivial—a perfectly legitimate comic exaggeration. Here Da Ponte goes further than Don Alfonso, for whom feeling is transitory but real enough while it lasts; for Da Ponte it is false through and through. We have to believe that the girls' feelings about the Albanians are as trivial as their original feelings about their lovers; that it has really been a lark in Despina's sense; that they have been as cold-blooded in giving in to the Albanians as the boys were in consenting to the masquerade. Otherwise, of course, they could hardly go back to their first lovers with so little pain; it took Fiordiligi three arias and a duet to change the first time, and if there was any depth to her feeling, she would require some parallel dramatic development to change back. True feeling must have been far from Da Ponte's mind. He wrote a clever comedy which is satirical, witty, superficial, and unworthy of Mozart—and I say so not on the basis of any Victorian sentimentality about Mozart's morality, but on the basis of what happened when he came to set the libretto. His approach to the action was neither that of the cynical Da Ponte, nor that of Don Alfonso the *"vecchio filosofo."*

For there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Alfonso's philosophy. Don Wolfgango, inevitably, took emotion seriously. Da Ponte should have known by this time that Mozart would pounce upon any feasible emotional matter, in however dry a book, and turn it to account. For a long time, Mozart valiantly parodied everything as Da Ponte wished. He developed a special arrangement for the ensembles, whereby the lovers sing in parallel thirds and sixths or else parrot each other's music closely. This gives the ensembles of *Così fan tutte* a curiously different quality from any others in Mozart: the characterization is neutral for the lovers, though as vivid as ever for Don Alfonso and Despina. The girls' three duets are almost indistinguishable in feeling: *"Ah guarda, sorella,"* expressing love for the original boys, *"Ah! che tutta in un momento,"* registering sorrow at their departure, and *"Prenderò quel brunettino,"* announcing their readiness for flirtation. They even tend to sing recitatives in thirds.

This initial neutrality of characterization determines the primary

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plane of reality in *Così fan tutte*. Obviously, musical parallelism was a convenience to Mozart; but I am sure that he adopted it primarily in order to show the lovers less as serious individuals than as anonymous representatives of their sexes. That is all they are to Don Alfonso. Anonymous representatives can have only conventional feelings, and such feelings, as Mozart knew, are all of about the same quality. So the paleness, the sameness, and the unintelligence which we feel in *Così fan tutte* are perfectly appropriate dramatically; and before dismissing the convention as uninteresting, we must consider Mozart's rich modulation of it in the second act. The full-blooded realism of *Figaro* would have been as wrong here as in *The Magic Flute* or *Idomeneo*. Mozart's treatment of the arias was also in accord with Da Ponte's artificial comedy, at first. These characters cannot gauge their emotions; in the arias of Act I, the girls' feelings are thoroughly parodied.

But as the libretto allows the characters to slip out of their neutrality, Mozart with an excellent sense of drama fires their individualities. Convention veils these people in the company of their sisters or companions or original lovers, whom we cannot take seriously; in later soliloquies, though, and most particularly in the two seduction duets, some of the veils begin to drop. This is so even with Dorabella, whose main function is to serve as a shallow foil for Fiordiligi. Her exquisite Duet with Guglielmo seems frigidly contained, with its heart- and locket-symbolism. But when he touches her, there is a sudden flash of feeling in a modulatory passage, and in the recapitulation (or resolution to this tiny drama) the divided phrases are as eloquent as the tremulous new orchestral figure. As for Fiordiligi, the more solemn sister, we cannot shake off the impression of sorrow in her second aria, "*Per pietà,*" for all its preposterousness; and her Duet with Ferrando has always been understood as the expressive center of the opera, as it is the dramatic center. No theory of *Così fan tutte* will do that does not take full measure of this wonderful piece. Fiordiligi is closer to emotional truth here than anyone anywhere else in the play.

And what of Ferrando in the duet? He has just sung of his fidelity to Dorabella in the *cavatina "Tradito, schernito,"* but Mozart never works on a double standard, and certainly means to tease him

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here just as he teased Fiordiligi when she swore eternal fidelity in *"Come scoglio."* If ever an operatic lover was sincere, it is Ferrando in the Duet with Fiordiligi—with its mysterious echo, too, of his lovely aria in Act I, *"Un' aura amorosa."* In opera we trust what is most convincing in the music.

Mozart's music clarifies and damns Da Ponte's cynicism, and so spoils his immaculate play. It was worth it. Where Da Ponte left room for personal sentiments under the actual stress of action, Mozart was too good a dramatist not to take them at face value: the girls' reactions to the Albanians and to their own distressing instability, the boys' attitudes towards their betrayals. Don Alfonso wanted to show that feelings change; Da Ponte wanted to expose them as meaningless; Mozart wanted to define their quality, whether they last or not. So in the end it is a wry joke on Da Ponte: fickleness seems irrelevant and relatively unreal; Mozart's point is that emotions touch anyhow, even if soon they alter. Don Alfonso's triumphant demonstration does not concern the central problem as Mozart saw it—the mystery of feeling itself. With Fiordiligi, indeed, it is not a matter of changing love but of finding it. Our main impression in the Duet with Ferrando is of her new capacity for genuine feeling, even—or perhaps, particularly—in her capitulation. Ferrando, after all, is obviously the better man.

As articulated by Mozart, then, the opera seems to show a pair of rather unconscious couples tried and drawn a little way out of their conventional shells of sentimentality, proffered suicides, lockets, and parallel thirds. Everything is very funny, and their progress is admirably dramatic, and we are pleased to discover that we feel for them after all. But then, as a conclusion, everything snaps back to the original state of affairs; emotion is eradicated depressingly in Lorenzo da Ponte's final jest. Fiordiligi's experience goes up in smoke as she turns blankly back to Guglielmo, whose insufficiency has meanwhile been made only too clear by the action. The *volte face* was witty enough in Da Ponte's scheme, but in Mozart's it is simply an anticlimax—yes, it is improbable and immoral, I am afraid. For the first time we realize how tired we are of the singing in thirds and sixths. It has been a long evening. The lovers are back in their original anonymity, without any explanation for the abrupt lowering

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of the imaginative level. That is quite undramatic. There is no ultimate epiphany, as in *Figaro,* and there really could not have been within the range of this excellently calculated libretto.

The libretto for *Così fan tutte* was too nearly perfect, in its soulless terms, for Mozart to deal with it properly in his. But the libretto for *Don Giovanni* left much to be desired—more than a composer was able to supply.

Now the critical attitude towards *Don Giovanni* has really changed as much as that towards *Così fan tutte,* though in just the opposite way. The Romantics worshipped it as a unique masterpiece, the only opera in which Mozart touched the daemonic roots of reality. From E. T. A. Hoffmann and Kierkegaard to Bernard Shaw and Richard Strauss, Don Giovanni has been idealized into a Faust or a Superman, a shining knight of the *ewig Weibliche* if not the life-force itself. Only in the twentieth century has historical scholarship labored to reveal the opera as an ordinary farce with supernatural additions, clumsily grafted together and blessedly over-composed. The story, apparently, was well known in *opera buffa,* and indeed discredited, fit for the provinces. If Da Ponte hadn't known that Mozart would be sure to spruce it up, he probably would never have touched it. The speed with which the piece had to be written explains certain crudities; Da Ponte was busy with two more fashionable composers and only had time to expand a previous libretto for Mozart. Since *Don Giovanni* was ordered for the city that loved *Figaro,* the authors set out to duplicate the winning features of that opera. Once Dent has pointed it out, it is easy to see that *Don Giovanni* was originally laid out in the unusual four-act scheme of *Figaro,* in order to include much action; that it exploits the same social complex of masters and servants; that it has the same baritone preponderance and three women, having been designed for the same company; and that many arias echo numbers in the earlier opera. "I know this thing only too well!" says Leporello when Don Giovanni's band plays the latest hit from *Figaro.*

The dependence runs deeper. The success of *Figaro* in Prague went to Mozart's head as well as to his heart, and *Don Giovanni,* written less than a year later, shows wonderful signs of his eagerness

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to develop his artistic gains. *Figaro* is remarkable for its graphic realism, which was unprecedented in *opera buffa,* and which Mozart must have stumbled upon under the influence of Beaumarchais' admirably realistic play. He applied and deepened the same quality of realism in *Don Giovanni*; but it was really rather thoughtless to have done so with this picaresque, supernatural, and not at all contemporary story. (Mozart never attempted such realism later, with *Così fan tutte* or *The Magic Flute.*) Almost accidentally, we may suppose, Mozart had discovered in *Figaro* the serious possibilities inherent in comic opera. His enthusiasm for pressing this discovery is everywhere apparent in *Don Giovanni*; he is ready to take anything and anybody seriously. To a composer in this frame of mind, Donna Anna was a priceless gift from the poet: a full-fledged Metastasian heroine, but for once in a vivid, naturalistic context! Beside her, *Idomeneo*'s Electra and *Tito*'s Vitellia seem pale and orderly. Mozart, now intoxicated with the dramatic power of the ensemble, left the greatest of all examples of this quintessential form in *Don Giovanni.* He rejoiced in *tours de force*; one dazzling effect follows another; the drama gets out of hand. If *Figaro* was an extremely clever work, *Don Giovanni* is magnificently brash. Perhaps it had to be, with that hoary subject matter. *Don Giovanni* is Mozart's richest score, and the dearest of all his operas to the musician, as it is to the opera-going public today.

The ballroom scene in *Don Giovanni* is one of the most brilliant things in all of opera. The celebrated Minuet here is not a "Mozartian" minuet; Mozart wrote it to sound archaic, stilted, a little absurd, and utterly empty. Against it the desperate intrigue proceeds in alarmingly naturalistic whispers. When Mozart then introduced two more dances simultaneously with the Minuet, all combined with mathematical inevitability and insanity, he created exactly the right effect of disorder within the rigidity of convention. It was an effect that Verdi could not recapture in *Rigoletto* or *Un Ballo in Maschera.*

Mozart's developing sense of musical means for drama is illustrated by his reworking of one small detail from *Figaro.* In the Sextet of Act II in *Don Giovanni,* the modulatory shock of the conspirators when Leporello throws off his disguise and explains that they have not caught Giovanni after all is parallel to, but better managed than,

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the musical reaction of the court at the end of *Figaro,* when the Countess throws off her disguise. Yet we cannot help noting, at the same time, the triviality to which the device is turned, as compared to the situation in *Figaro*. Dramaturgical perfection is not the same thing as fine drama.

Can Da Ponte's libretto as a whole support Mozart's sense of drama, his graphic realism, his profundity of insight and expression? The question will not arise for those who regard opera like Dr. Johnson as "an irrational and exotic entertainment." But it certainly will for those who look at other Mozart operas and find that they are rational and essentially not exotic in the least. Certainly the libretto to *Don Giovanni* "works" on the large level; Da Ponte was an excellent theatrical craftsman, and his knowledge of dramatic rhythm did not desert him here. But on many levels the piece shows deficiencies more severe than any in Mozart's other great operas. The libretto is full of improbabilities; to cite only one of the first—furious Elvira stands patiently listening to a servant sing a long, insolent, suggestive aria about her betrayal. Whereas the improbabilities of *Così fan tutte* are carefully chosen and witty, those of *Don Giovanni* are fortuitous and clumsy; while *Figaro,* of course, does not show any improbabilities. It always takes a modicum of care to arrange arias in a libretto, and in *Così fan tutte* this is always elegantly done. In *Figaro,* four arias are inserted into Act IV stiffly enough, but though they strain our patience, they do not strain our credulity. The way in which the last act of *Don Giovanni* is distorted to provide arias for Anna and Elvira, however, can only be called dramatically cynical, whether they enhance characterization or not. And these faults in *Don Giovanni* are especially glaring in its context of passionate naturalism.

As far as characterization is concerned, Mozart's wonderful picture of the three women has always been rightly admired—if often wrongly interpreted: steely Donna Anna, innocent (yes, innocent) Zerlina, and especially Donna Elvira, the first of Mozart's developing heroines, a type more systematically worked out with Fiordiligi and Pamina. But rich personalities do not automatically make for true drama; the study of characterization was the primrose path of older dramatic criticism. What is one to say of the mysterious Don himself?

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He is an unaware person for a Mozartian hero, though his charm, largesse, ingenuity, and reasonableness are not left in doubt. The singular fact is that until the end almost all of the action and musical expression goes to illuminate the people with whom he is involved, not Don Giovanni himself. This seems to me a dramatic mistake, and one that was fatally compounded when Da Ponte began to build the second act around Leporello; even the scene in the graveyard, which certainly should involve Don Giovanni and the Statue, turns out to be mostly about Leporello. Like Faust and Peer Gynt, Don Juan goes through a series of loosely joined adventures. It was clever and dramatic of Da Ponte to succeed in relating them so well; but this very cleverness led him into an impasse which Marlowe and Ibsen avoided—the adventures assume more interest than the hero. To say that Don Giovanni's lack of involvement is precisely the strongest element of his personality is to argue *ab vacuo*; in opera we trust what is done most firmly by the music. The very blankness of Don Giovanni's characterization, indeed, must have been what especially attracted Romantic critics. Their daydreams and idealizations could sprout and flourish in Mozart's relative void.

Finally, though, Leporello is pushed under the table, in the great scene where the Statue pulls Don Giovanni down to hell. Mozart composed the Finale here *con amore*; it was another godsent opportunity to be serious and intense. The eighteenth century may have been used to treating Don Juan in terms of farce with supernatural additions, but under the influence of Mozart's setting of the catastrophe, we cannot shun its implications. Inherent in the legend is the conflict between the glamour and the irrevocability of sin. The opera merely enlarges this conflict—an expression of the "daemonic," or else a weakness in the central conception, according to taste. Up to the end, our sympathies have been enlisted for the hero in countless ways; then Mozart shows him destroyed in a scene whose terror and conviction suddenly dominate the drama. As the action touches Don Giovanni at last, he rises magnificently to the occasion, fearless and true to himself in a crisis which is past pride. In what way, then, does he deserve his doom? What does Mozart think of his damnation? What does Don Giovanni himself think—for presumably by this time he will be open to some introspection? Honest and subtle equivocation

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would be a dramatic possibility, but instead we have accidental and unformed ambiguity. Either Da Ponte was unaware of all the questions which he conjured up along with his devils, or else he deliberately pushed them under. Certainly the Epilogue answers none of them; it merely shows how drab life is without the Don.

It is no use speculating on what might have been. Mozart, who transformed other dramas, might have transformed this one, but Da Ponte is mostly responsible for the weakness. After all, nobody believes in ghosts and devils, least of all Don Giovanni; such things can assuredly be put on the stage, but only on the strict condition that the convention and the attitude are clearly established. This is what everyone else has done who has dealt with Don Juan or any of his dramatic brothers. But Da Ponte failed to rationalize the action. One rather suspects that he lacked the intellectual force to cope with it.

Kierkegaard first spoke of a magic "marriage" between the genius of Mozart and the subject-matter of Don Juan, and many have followed him in this view. I myself could not disagree more completely; the whole basis of the Don Juan legend seems to me curiously out of Mozart's intellectual, ethical, and metaphysical style. Very few people nowadays see Mozart as a "daemonic" composer, even if they think of music as a daemonic art. In a work like the g-minor Quintet, we sense an exquisitely constrained pathos, in the Piano Concerto in c-minor a controlled foreshadowing of Beethovenian tragedy, in the Requiem Mass a certain frustration strikingly symbolized by its noncompletion. As an opera composer, Mozart had dwelt more profoundly than anyone else on man in relation to other men and women, never in relation to God and the universe. Then suddenly theology was thrust on him at the end of *Don Giovanni*—right at the end, when things were getting rushed, as usual. He did his best, a very wonderful best, but everything we know or feel about Mozart should assure us that the inflexible view of sin and death set forth in the legend must have been distasteful to him. Mozart never saw man's will as inevitably opposed by the will of God. He conceived an essential harmony expressed by human feelings; his terms were brotherhood and sympathy and humility, not damnation and defiance. The magic marriage is *The Magic Flute*.

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And with *The Magic Flute* anyone might be tempted to echo Kierkegaard about the consuming desire of Genius for Idea. What an extraordinary subject, after all, as compared with the traditional claptrap of Don Juan. No mystique is necessary to comprehend the opera, though. "The initial idea of *Die Zauberflöte* was to be more or less as follows: the hero makes the acquaintance of the fairy queen, who gives him a portrait of her daughter and sends him to rescue her from captivity in the castle of the wicked magician, which he will be able to do by the help of the magic flute. For some reason which has never yet been satisfactorily explained, the whole plot was completely changed at this stage."[3] I should think that this change can be explained very simply and very happily on the assumption that Mozart himself insisted on it, and thereafter strictly supervised the libretto. The opera as we know it, then, would have been determined not by any Magic or Destiny, but by a conscious intellectual decision on Mozart's part. For the first time, at long last, Mozart appears to have been in charge; he really learned to bully his librettist; maybe he was responsible for the participation of the shadowy Carl Ludwig Giesecke. Unlike *Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute* is unified in conception, and everything about it matches the temper of Mozart's genius. All the diversities—of musical style, action, tone, and mood—are perfectly controlled to a single dramatic end.

The Magic Flute is the least problematic of Mozart's operas; nobody can miss or misinterpret its humane message. In a hundred years the only real change in critical attitude toward it is that now we take it seriously. Mozart's view of destiny is rather mystic than

3 Dent, in *Mozart's Operas.* Of course, no external proof exists for the change in plot; and the inconsistencies that this change is supposed to have caused have been exaggerated. The Queen of the Night and her Ladies are first represented as forces for good, but this only corresponds to Tamino's opinion; his own later reflection and better understanding are matched by that of the audience. It has been objected that the Magic Flute and Bells, as gifts from the Queen, should not become agencies of good; but in fairy tales magic items are always morally indifferent. And one of the not-so-subtle aspects of the action is that Tamino wins through his own character and through Pamina's love, not essentially by magic. In the scene of the lovers' meeting Pamina explains at considerable length that the Flute was mysteriously shaped by her father; the Flute then is in some sense hers, and it is Pamina who guides Tamino through the ordeals. Magic and deceit are the Queen's powers. Sarastro's are deeper, more lasting, and human.

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Manichaean. In Sarastro's realm sin merits neither glamour nor damnation; it is simply checked as inevitably as day follows night:

Die Strahlen der Sonne vertreiben die Nacht,
Zernichten der Heuchler erschlichene Macht.

Lying is met by a temporary padlock on the lips, lechery by a beating, deceit by rendering the rebels impotent. Virtue is attained by an esoteric but democratic and hospitable ascent, in which Tamino, Pamina, and even Papageno can all share in various ways. Tamino, ready at first to fall in love with images, takes the Queen of the Night at her word, just as the audience does. He learns to doubt, to seek a higher reality, and to submit to the Ordeals. Pamina learns love, despair, and freedom from parental despotism. For both of them, a deeper love is the last step, and they stand together before the Fire and the Water. Pamina assists Tamino; what the supposedly misogynic Freemasons thought of this, I cannot say, but Mozart made it the center of his drama. Pamina is by far the fullest person in it, and her progress, by way of Mozart's greatest aria, *"Ach, ich fühl's,"* is the most emphatically articulated. (One need only imagine the opera without her—it could "work," after a fashion—to realize how valuable her role is.) Through brotherhood man achieves Wisdom, Virtue, and the Love of God, and brotherhood is not restricted by sex. Nor by intelligence; Papageno, who is generally unconscious and afraid, can gain his salvation too if he will keep good cheer and not lie. The gods are as humble as men. Sarastro suffers gently with his novices, and all the Priests and Spirits and Armed Men are their brothers.

Since the underlying conception is so simple and pure, the almost crazy variety of musical style which Mozart dared bring together can harmonize as beautifully as the solemn animals of the Peaceable Kingdom. There is no stress of stylistic contradiction, as there is in *Don Giovanni,* though the elements are in actual fact much more disparate: *opera seria* arias and *opera buffa* ensembles, panpipe scales and an Overture with a real fugal theme, Masonic fanfares and a Lutheran chorale which sounds like Bach, Viennese street-songs and (as Shaw said) the only music yet written fit for the mouth of God. All these seem to be subsumed under the particular "Magic Flute style," the style of Mozart's last months. There is a new serenity, a

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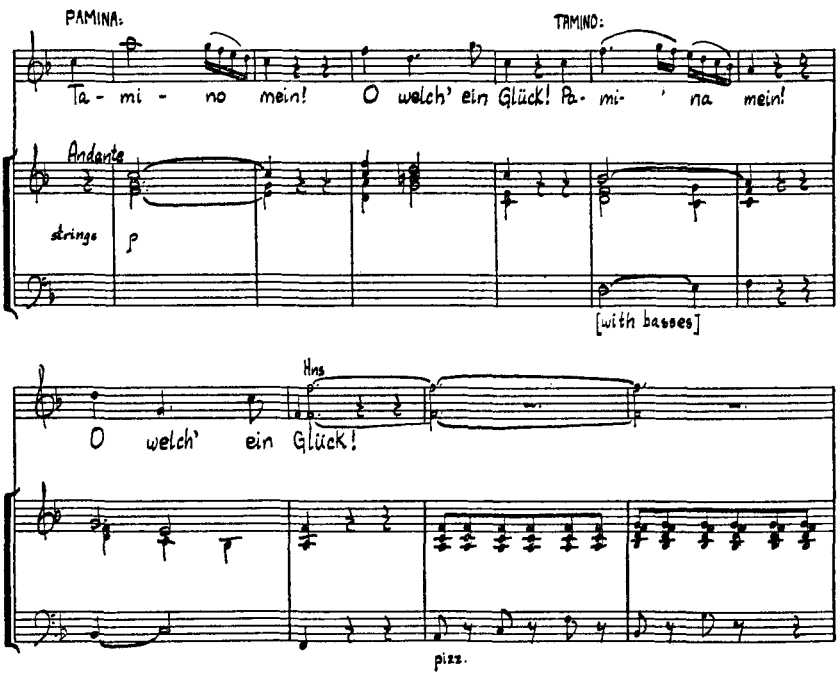
new sense of control over basic processes, a distillation of technique to the purest essentials of the art. Mozart can hardly resolve a dominant-seventh chord now without shedding on it a light that no other composer has ever comprehended:



These sublime accents were foreshadowed by the climactic scene of reconciliation at the end of *Figaro*. They recur now in works like the Clarinet Quintet, the Clarinet Concerto, the last Piano Concerto (B-flat, K.595), the Rondo for Musical Glasses, the Fantasy for Mechanical Organ, and sometimes in *La Clemenza di Tito* and the Requiem Mass.

Little needs to be added to Dent's analysis and appreciation of the impeccable dramatic structure of *The Magic Flute*. Everything progresses calmly but firmly and clearly, the pacing is immaculate, and at every point the music sums up the dramatic situation and illuminates it. From the very opening scene, which is in its quiet way as perfect as the first scene in *Don Giovanni,* we see that the vir-

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tuosity of the earlier opera has given way to effortless assurance; this is especially striking in the treatment of the ensemble. Music defines the marvelous dramatic illusion, the fairy-tale world which exposes Mozart's vision of human perfectability and the vanity of evil. Planes of reality merge in this music, and all the diverse lines of action converge to one resolution: the grave, tranquil, unearthly March heard as the initiates go forward to suffer the Ordeals. This still climax, with flute and drums and quiet brass, is surely the most extraordinary in all opera. If Gluck had written it, we would complain that it has no counterpoint; if Mozart had written it anywhere else, we could rightly call it senseless. For the avenging Statue, Mozart had been able to paint a Triumph of Death which has probably been the despair of later composers. Now he shows the Queen of Night's defeat, in her last ensemble, *"Nur stille, stille, stille, stille!"* as a painless, almost organic process. Her agent Monastatos is innocent of trombones, chromatic rows, and d-minor; at his first appearance he is practically equated with Papageno, and he always sings approximately in Papageno's comic style. The coloratura of the Queen herself can mislead only the uninitiated or the unthinking, children or children in spirit. It had seduced Mozart in *Die Entführung.*

You can hear it said that *The Magic Flute* is a supreme work of art entirely on account of its beautiful music, and in spite of the foolish accompanying plot. That is the "pure-music" view of opera. But the truth is that its adherents would not tolerate fully a third of the music of *The Magic Flute* in the concert-hall, outside its dramatic framework; think of Papageno's folk-songs, or Tamino's great recitative with the Orator, or the unimaginably bare March for the Ordeals. Other critics, and especially Germans, have admired voluminously its combination of beautiful music and noble ideals. This can be sentimental, though, unless the nature of the alloy can be defined; plenty of Metastasian operas have put beautiful music next to noble ideals without suffering canonization. The strength of *The Magic Flute* is that its philosophy or its binding dramatic idea is consistently moulded by the dramatic form, in which music is the essential element, as always in opera. Something of what Freemasonry meant to Mozart—something of what religion means to any man—is indeed fused into articulation here, and musical drama is the refining agent.

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Ideals can be cheapened, and doubtless they are by Schikaneder's doggerel. Ideals can also be raised to a unique personal incandescence, and that they are by Mozart's drama.

The four great operas of Mozart all show music's great power to determine dramatic form. *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro* show further how such dramatic form can articulate a consistent, profound action. In these masterpieces, all Mozart's eloquence and strength, his faultless response to action, his control over the dramaturgical wealth of the ensemble, his sensitivity to character in the aria, his famous ingenuity, sympathy, delicacy, and humor, and above all his superb sense of artistic form on every level—all these are fired to cast a single dramatic conception. One cannot very well describe such a conception without lapsing into platitudes; one can find words more easily for operas like *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte,* wherein the dramatic ideas are half-formed or unresolved, despite very great beauties. But where the dramatist has been successful, the idea cannot be defined except as the work itself. The meaning of a complete work of art will be manifested only in the medium that realizes, consummates, or creates it. The vindication of opera as drama comes in such occasional, unique triumphs; and among these, Mozart has left our most precious examples.

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Richard Wilbur

ALTITUDES

I

Look up into the dome:
It is a great salon, a brilliant place,
  Yet not too splendid for the race
Whom we imagine there, wholly at home

With the gold-rosetted white
Wainscot, the oval windows, and the fault-
  Less figures of the painted vault.
Strolling, conversing in that precious light,

They chat no doubt of love,
The pleasant burden of their courtesy
  Borne down at times to you and me
Where, in this dark, we stand and gaze above.

For all they cannot share,
All that the world cannot in fact afford,
  Their lofty premises are floored
With the massed voices of continual prayer.

II

How far it is from here
To Emily Dickinson's father's house in America;
  Think of her climbing a spiral stair
Up to the little cupola with its clear

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Four panes, its room for one.
Like the dark house below, so full of eyes
In mirrors and of shut-in flies,
This chamber furnished only with the sun

Is she and she alone,
A mood to which she rises, in which she sees
Bird-choristers in all the trees
And a wild shining of the pure unknown

On Amherst. This is caught
In the dormers of a neighbor, who, no doubt,
Will before long be coming out
To pace about his garden, lost in thought.

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Selma Fraiberg

KAFKA AND THE DREAM

For most of his life, it appears, Kafka lived on terms of dangerous intimacy with the world of the dream. He possessed a kind of sensory knowledge of the dream and the dimensions of consciousness which could only be achieved by a man who had an extraordinary relationship to his own inner life. This knowledge did not come from a clinical study of his own states of consciousness, and I feel certain that it did not come from psychoanalytic texts. Kafka was not an academic student of the mind. He was however a meticulous observer of his own mental activity.

There is evidence that he experienced mental states in which dream-like images and fantasies emerged, then were caught and held in consciousness, naked specimens of unconscious productions. Often he preserved these things in his notebooks, recorded along with the texts of nocturnal dreams, obsessional thoughts, fragments of memories, and hundreds of other bits and pieces of the disordered contents of his inner world. Here and there in the Kafka stories a piece from this attic debris makes its ghostly reappearance. In many instances a dream, a fantasy, or a piece of imagery recorded in the notebooks becomes the starting point for a sketch or a story. There is evidence, then, that he not only made exhaustive investigations of his own mental processes but also made use of his discoveries in his writing.

Introspection for Kafka was not a reflective process but a disease, the compulsion of his morbid guilt, which drew him deeper and deeper into psychic depths in hopeless pursuit of the crime and the judgment. It was an obsessional occupation which became a torment for him and slowly widened the gap between himself and the real world. In 1922 this estrangement reached a critical point and Kafka viewed his mental state with alarm. On January 16 he writes: "This

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past week I suffered something very like a breakdown . . . " ". . . impossible to sleep, impossible to endure life, or, more exactly, the course of life. The clocks are not in unison; the inner one runs crazily on at a devilish or demoniac or in any case inhuman pace, the outer one limps along at its usual speed. What else can happen but that the two worlds split apart, and they do split apart, or at least clash in a fearful manner. There are doubtless several reasons for the wild tempo of the inner process; the most obvious one is introspection, which will suffer no idea to sink tranquilly to rest but must pursue each one into consciousness, only itself to become an idea, in turn to be pursued by renewed introspection." And later in the same entry: "The solitude that for the most part has been forced on me, in part voluntarily sought by me—but what was this if not compulsion too?—is now losing all its ambiguity and approaches its dénouement. Where is it leading? The strongest likelihood is, that it may lead to madness. . . ." Later that month the panic gives way to melancholy resignation. On January 28 he writes: ". . . for I am now a citizen of this other world, whose relationship to the ordinary one is the relationship of the wilderness to cultivated land. . . ." And on the following day he writes: ". . . it is only that the attraction of the human world is so immense, in an instant it can make one forget everything. Yet the attraction of my world too is strong. . . ."

The mental crisis did not end as he feared in madness, but in disease. This was the year of the onset of Kafka's tuberculosis. He understood his illness and wrote to Brod, "My head has made an appointment with my lungs behind my back."

Of the two worlds, Kafka's and "the human world," it was the first that he knew best. Kafka wrote about himself, his inner experience, and the struggle with nameless tyrants, the lustful couples who copulate within the sight of the law, the endless tribunal, the comic-tragic bureaucrats and corrupt officials—all of these were not conceived as allegories for his time but were events of inner life. (His own comments and interpretations of his works repeatedly bear this out.) If his writings achieve the effect of satire and broad social caricature, it is because the dream is in itself a caricature of life; the dream is in one sense an allegory. Moreover Kafka knew this and understood it very well. In a conversation Janouch says to Kafka: "The *Metamorphosis* is a terrible dream, a terrible conception."

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Kafka replies: "The dream reveals the reality, which conception lags behind. That is the horror of life—the terror of art. . . ."

I think it is also a mistake to look upon his writings, as Charles Neider proposes, as "freudian allegories" or to speak of Kafka's deliberate use of "freudian symbols." If Kafka was acquainted with psychoanalytic ideas (and there is some evidence for this), he did not pluck his symbols from clinical texts like an amateur with a drugstore dream book. The use of the term "freudian symbols" is, in itself, an embarrassment in considering this view, for Freud was not the inventor of dream symbols but their investigator, and he repeatedly acknowledged his debt to the creative writers who were the discoverers of symbolism, including that of the dream.

No formula for dream interpretation exists in psychoanalysis. A dream, a symbol, can be properly interpreted only through the personal associations of the dreamer. While Freud brought attention to a number of "universal" symbols, he repeatedly stressed the multideterminants in symbol choice, and hence the futility of assigning a single meaning to a symbol. Neider's extrapolation of symbols, his mechanical interpretations, and codification of the symbol types result in a piece of analysis which is psychoanalytically unsound and which debases the work studied. It is worth mentioning, too, that many of the symbols which he has dealt with are interpreted arbitrarily by him and without the authority of clinical investigation. So far as I know no clinical investigator has found that a court stands for "the unconscious" or a boarding house for "the preconscious," and I think it very unlikely that this will ever be demonstrated.

Moreover, we must admit that even those symbols which are properly speaking "universal" are not in themselves the material for creative work. Symbols are sterile things in themselves; it is only when the symbol is animated through personal experience, when it acquires dimensions of meaning and ambiguity, that it can evoke emotional reactions.

Kafka may have profited from the psychoanalytic investigation of dreams and dream symbolism, but he wrote out of inner experience. An investigation of Kafka symbolism will demonstrate repeatedly how little he was influenced by the arbitrary dream symbol. It seems to me to be as unprofitable to try to understand Kafka and his writing in terms of "freudian symbols" as it is to understand a dream apart from the dreamer's own associations.

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If Kafka knew the world of the dream better than the rest of us, he was not indebted to Freud but to his personal suffering. He called himself, at last, "a citizen of this other world." He was not like the rest of us, the nocturnal visitors, who are favored on return with a merciful amnesia or dim recall. He had taken up his ghostly residence there, and habituation had given his eyes a special kind of night vision so that the forms and events of the dream which ordinary dreamers call uncertain and indistinct were tangible and real, capable of description in fine detail. Even the texts of his own dreams, recorded in his notebooks, are remarkable for the recall of detail and the visual preciseness.

The danger in such intimacy with the dream world is that the connections to the other world may be lost, and this danger was real and known to Kafka. His writing was the bridge, the connection between the two worlds; it was the strongest of the bonds which united him with the real world. And the writings themselves told the same story of the danger, or the failure, or the impossibility of human connections.

He wrote his biography in his symbolism of lost connections—the intercepted letters, the interrupted coitus, the telephones with the connections to nowhere. There is the indescribable loneliness and sadness of the little train in "The Railroad of Kalda" which makes its way into the frozen interior of Russia and regularly comes to its end in the middle of the wilderness, never to reach its destination. It is a train without mission, bearing a tiny freight and a few passengers in the course of the year, running its course between nowhere and nowhere. At the train stop the company's agent dwells in solitude in an abandoned wooden shed, in despair of life and afraid of death. The Kalda story, too, is unfinished. No man can write the end of his autobiography.

These symbols of lost connections, like all powerful symbols (and unlike those symbols which are plucked cheaply from dream books), are highly stratified and rich in latent meaning. They speak of the failures in human connections and communication which are recurrent motifs in Kafka's writing and his life. The wretched railroad of Kalda, once conceived by its owners in a surge of capitalist daring and hope, has come to nothing, a toy train chugging its way through vast space to its absurd and melancholy end in the wastes.

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This is the parable of Kafka's failure in the eyes of his father. And the ridiculous railroad, this mockery of men's extravagant hopes and ambitions, is Kafka's symbol for the failure of his own ambitions, and for the failure of his lifelong struggle with an unconquerable opponent, here represented as the vastness of a wilderness which cannot be spanned by the tiny train, in real life by the figure of a giant, the father, before whom Kafka remained an insignificant dwarf as boy and grown man. It is the symbol for the unfinished work, the uncompleted writings. It is the comment on Kafka's religious views, the failure to reach anything "beyond." And it is the symbol of biological failure. The little train which is never to reach its destination speaks eloquently and touchingly of Kafka's sexual impotence. The little train comes to its end in the middle of the wilderness, a full day's journey from Kalda, discharges its few passengers, its small freight, and returns. And the ground of this tiny settlement was frozen solid, we are told. "I was too weak to conquer the soil," said the company's agent. "A stubborn soil that was frozen solid until spring and that even resisted the sharp edge of my new axe. Whatever seed one sowed in it was lost."

It is a striking fact that Kafka, the "citizen of this other world," should have established his human fellowship in his writings through the fraternity of the dream. He had only the frailest connections with what he called "the human world," and his life was a tragedy of lost and broken communications with that world. Yet his literary genius was most pronounced in his ability to communicate elemental emotion and primal experience. It is a communication which is direct and powerful and owes its effect to a profound insight; it is the creation through the device of the private dream of a world of collective memory where each man can know his fellow.

II

It is probable that when the current enthusiasm for Kafka has run its course Kafka will emerge with less stature as a writer but with undiminished prestige as an innovator in the technique of the psychological novel. For Kafka has brought a thoroughly original and revolutionary approach to the problem of the representation of psychic dimensions in literature.

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We must consider that the discoveries of psychoanalysis have made demands upon the writer which are entirely unlike those of other systems of ideas. A theory of biology, of society, of politics, or of history can be given suitable expression within the framework of a narrative without straining the conventional means of communication. But a scientific theory of psychic dimensions and the primary processes of thought and imagery make unique demands upon the writer's equipment and his technique when he attempts to represent these ideas in his work.

Language, itself, as an instrument of the reasoning ego, seems opposed to working for unreason in the service of the unconscious. The higher order of thinking which is implicit in language is incompatible with the archaic mental system which governs the primary thought processes. The dream, for example, doesn't "speak" a language. It can only represent words and ideas through pictures. The spoken word or phrase, if it comes into the dream at all, is torn from the context of waking life and played back like a dusty record. Similarly, the writer's conventional devices of narration oppose the representation of unconscious thought processes. The story-teller gives order to his materials; the dreamer gives disorder to his. The story reveals, makes explicit, intends to communicate its meaning; the manifest dream conceals, disguises, has no intention of communicating.

It is understandable, then, that the writers who have attempted to bring this dimension of mind into the scope of their work have usually found it necessary to experiment upon the language itself and the techniques of narration. In one way or another these writers tried to recreate the world of the unconscious by borrowing the method of unconscious thought processes, the so-called "primary process." The dream's method of plastic representation, ellipsis, condensation, and symbol formation, provided models for a new writing. The writer's problem of narration of unconscious mental processes also found solutions in the model of the dream. The dream dispenses with logical connections. Its contents are brought together only because of their associative links and without regard for order or coherence. Its meaning can only be established through translation. The transposition of unconscious thought processes in writing led to various types of "stream of consciousness" writing which, like the dream, could be understood only through interpretation.

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Kafka did not trouble himself at all with the mechanical problems of entering the dream world. He found an easy solution to the problem of the language barrier. He simply walked through it. His prose style which Mann described as "a conscientious, curiously explicit, objective, clean, and correct style" undergoes no distortions, employs no language tricks, and is perfectly consistent and reasonable in the reporting of events, real or delusional.

No one has succeeded with this device as Kafka has. No one else can evoke the world of the dream with such chilling authenticity. Kafka's so-called "dream technique" springs from a conception of the dream as a work of art. Kafka explored the aesthetic properties of the dream. He understood the primary relationship between unconscious mental processes and the form and composition of the dream. By taking the dream as his model in his own compositions, he achieved the perfect formal conditions for the representation of unconscious experience. Now this, in itself, is not an innovation; experimental writers of this century have turned to this method of composition repeatedly in the attempt to evoke the qualities of the dream. But when Kafka unites the structural aspects of the dream with his narrative technique, his compositions achieve the most extraordinary effects of the dream itself. This is all the more impressive when we regard the seeming artlessness, the unambitious character of his narrative technique. It is simply the narration of a dream by a dreamer.

One evening I returned home to my room from the office somewhat later than usual—an acquaintance had detained me below at the house entrance for a long time—opened the door (my thoughts were still engrossed by our conversation, which had consisted chiefly of gossip about people's social standing), hung my overcoat on the hook and was about to cross over to the washstand when I heard a strange, spasmodic breathing. I looked up and, on top of the stove that stood deep in the gloom of the corner, saw something alive. Yellowish glittering eyes stared at me; large round woman's breasts rested on the shelf of the stove, on either side beneath the unrecognizable face; the creature seemed to consist entirely of a mass of soft white flesh; a thick yellowish tail hung down beside the stove, its tip ceaselessly passing back and forth over the cracks of the tiles.

The first thing I did was to cross over with long strides and sunken head—nonsense! nonsense! I kept repeating like a prayer. . . .

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The effect of this passage, the immediate sense of the nightmare, is achieved not by its contents alone, not by the stove monster, but by the prose treatment. It is the conventional narration, the factual, ordinary rendering of this event which produces the effect of the uncanny. This is entirely in accord with the psychological mechanism in the experience of the uncanny by which unreal events are perceived as real, the inanimate is animated, and the delusion or dream obtains conviction. Kafka demonstrates by this technique that the quality of uncanniness which we attribute to the dream and the delusion is not a property of the dream itself or of unconscious experience; it belongs to the ego, the representative of consciousness and reality, and is produced when a repressed idea is given illusory confirmation by an event in consciousness with the effect of momentarily breaking off the ego's contact with reality.

Now since the uncanny is not a quality of the dream itself, but derives from an impairment of an ego faculty, that of reality testing, a narrative which attempts to simulate the experience of dreaming or to evoke the "uncanniness" of the dream must deceive the critical and judging faculties of the ego through a prose which apparently sustains logic and belief at the same time that it affirms the delusion. The ideal prose for this treatment is everyday speech, a factual narration in simple declarative sentences. The narration of events and visions from a night-world in the ordinary, accustomed prose of waking life produces exactly that sense of dissolving reason which makes reality a dream and the dream a reality, in essence the quality of uncanniness.

Let us consider whether the same effect could be achieved through an experiment upon the language itself and the mode of narration. Now a prose which attempts to evoke the experience of dreaming by borrowing the method of the dream work must break up the structure of speech in order to bring it into a primitive system of thought. Syntax has no place in primary mental processes, and such a narrative needs to free itself from the order and restriction of language, yet cannot abandon it completely for functional reasons. Meaning will suffer through this treatment, of course, but this is a dimension of mind which is cut off from the higher mental faculties, has no reason of its own, no order or coherence, and for many purposes of the writer the obscurity and ambiguity of this liberated prose

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will strengthen the analogy to dreaming. Similarly, by abandoning the patterns of everyday speech, the writer can introduce phrasing and rhythms which recall the fluidity and merging forms of unconscious thought processes. Such a radical departure from the spoken language can include words themselves. The dream can be taken as a model for bold invention and license in language. For although it "speaks no language," it represents the word in visual forms and symbols which both mask and unmask the language of waking life and reveal the infinitely ramified structure of meaning. The writer who takes this license of the dream for himself can achieve dimensions of meaning and a richness of allusion unparalleled in everyday speech. It is unnecessary to add that these experiments upon the language demand such powerful gifts of imagination in a writer that they have only rarely produced important results.

This writing which bends the language, changes its order, its accustomed phrasing and usage, can achieve many effects of its own in the representation of unconscious mental processes, but it cannot achieve the effect of the uncanny or cause the reader to experience the dream-like narrative as a dream. We stand outside of the dream in reacting to this writing; certain sensory effects of the dream are induced in us, but we are not deluded. Our knowledge that this is unreal or that this is a dream is not even momentarily destroyed. This is because the distortions of language have already stamped the experience as unreal. It is analogous to a situation described by Freud in his essay on "The Uncanny." He demonstrates that the feeling which we describe as uncanny is always dependent in fiction or in life upon the appearance of unreal events as real, but when, as in fairy tales, the setting and the frankly animistic character of the events depart from the world of reality from the start, the feeling of uncanniness cannot be obtained. In the fairy tale or any fictional form that by its setting or form of presentation states its unreal character, the reader *willingly* participates in the delusion. In producing the experience of the uncanny in fiction, the writer must take care to exclude his reader's judgment and criticism and cause him to participate in the fictional delusion without a moment's reflection or the exercise of consciousness.[1]

1 For another treatment of the "uncanny" in Kafka's writing, see M. B. Hecht, "Uncanniness, Yearning and Franz Kafka's Works," *Imago,* April 1952.

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The authentic dream quality, which Kafka achieves, owes a large part of its effect to narrative devices which temporarily dissolve the reader's sensory contact with reality and cause him to fall back upon archaic forms of thinking. Kafka erases the boundaries between reality and the dream; his transition from one world to another is as imperceptible as the moment between waking and sleeping. In much of Kafka's writing there is this ghostly treading between two worlds, made all the more sinister by the insubstantial and muted forms of reality and the electrifying clarity of the delusion and the dream. The passage from the ordinary event of coming home from the office and hanging up a coat to the extraordinary vision of a monster occurs without an interval. In analogy with the dream the interval does not exist; it is not remarked upon for the same reason that no man knows the moment he falls asleep, loses this self for the other self in the dream, or leaves his bed to flee through hollow corridors. In recreating through the narrative the psychic transition from waking to dreaming, Kafka brings the reader directly into the dream. He causes the reader to suspend reason and criticism, to submit to the delusion, through the simple device of juxtaposing reality and the dream in agreement with the psychic experience of the emerging dream.

The effect is strengthened when the narrative, as in the stove-monster sequence, proceeds to treat fantastic events as real in the same way that events of the dream are experienced as real by the dreamer. The narrator did not imagine that he saw a monster; he *saw* it; and the description of the monster in fine detail supports the delusional effect in much the same way that the eye-witnesses of flying saucers support their delusions through minute descriptions of the little men, their clothing, and the size and appearance of the craft.

Kafka's use of metaphor must also be considered in a study of his "dream technique." In the dream a metaphor is represented in its literal aspect. In the metaphor, for example, it is "as if" Kafka were a species of vermin; in the story, "Metamorphosis," as in a dream representation, he *is* a noxious bug. In many places in Kafka's diaries we can trace the evolution of a story or details of a story from a metaphor. In the "Letter to My Father," for example, Kafka has the father answer his reproaches in an imaginary speech in which the father says, "And there is the fight of the vermin, which not only bite, but at the same time suck the blood on which they live. . . ."

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In the diaries he speaks of the broken engagement with F. B. as "the tribunal in the hotel," and employs other metaphors to represent his engagement as "an arrest," himself as "a criminal." Later, in *The Trial,* we see the concrete representation of these metaphors (though I do not wish to imply that the meaning of the work is contained in these metaphors alone). Similarly we can find the genesis for the story, "The Burrow," in these remarks in his diary, October 6, 1915: "Various types of nervousness. I think noises can no longer disturb me, though to be sure I am not doing any work now. Of course, the deeper one digs one's pit, the quieter it becomes, the less fearful one becomes, the quieter it becomes." In "The Burrow" he represents his illness, his fear of life, in a literal treatment of the metaphorical allusion. The small, frightened animal has dug deep into the ground, and with cunning and ingenuity he has created a labyrinth in which he is snug and safe and which assures him escape in case of danger. "But the most beautiful thing about my burrow is the stillness."

III

In any circumstances, the relationship between art and the dream is difficult to analyze. The psychoanalytic investigator needs to bear in mind Trilling's insistence that the dream-art analogy must be corrected to allow for the artist's conscious command of his fantasy. He quotes Lamb: "The . . . poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject but he has dominion over it."

Kafka provides a special case for the study of the relationship between the dream and creative work. He has given us evidence that he employed his dreams and the productions of dream-like states in his writing. In his diaries Kafka records a large number of his own dreams. Many of these are terror dreams, dreams of torture, mutilation, flight from attackers, of lepers and whores and disease, filth, excrement, and monotonously, regularly, dreams of the father, the formidable opponent who cannot be conquered and who cannot be escaped. A number of these dreams become the starting point for a story or a sketch in the diaries, so that we can if we wish examine the relationship between the two.

Like all victims of recurrent terror dreams, Kafka suffered from insomnia. He feared sleep; he feared his dreams, and the struggle

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against sleep and the yearning for sleep were in themselves a repetition of a lifelong struggle, as if sleep had become the formidable opponent who could not be conquered and to whom it was dangerous to submit. In a conversation with Janouch he says, "Perhaps my insomnia only conceals a great fear of death. Perhaps I am afraid that the soul—which in sleep leaves me—will never return. Perhaps insomnia is only an all too vivid sense of sin, which is afraid of the possibility of a sudden judgment. Perhaps insomnia is itself a sin. Perhaps it is a rejection of the natural."

He wrote at night. *"Wenn es nicht diese grauenvollen, schlaflosen Nächte gäbe, so würde ich überhaupt nicht schreiben. So wird mir aber immer meine dunkle Einzelhaft bewusst."* But the apparitions of the dream which he fended off through sleeplessness forced their way into the fantasies and obsessive thoughts which occupied him at these times. These fantasies were themselves very close to dream productions and were the sources of a number of stories and sketches. On one occasion Janouch attempts to pin down Kafka on the meaning of *The Verdict*. Kafka, after some embarrassment, says, *"The Verdict* is the spectre of a night." "What do you mean?" "It is a spectre." "And yet you wrote it," Janouch says. And Kafka replies, "That is merely the verification, and so the complete exorcism of the spectre." So that writing for Kafka was also the rite and the magic act for the subduing of his disturbing visions. In another conversation with Janouch he allies writing and conjuration: *"Das Schreiben ist eben eine Art von Geisterbeschwörung."*

Kafka has left us an extraordinary record for the study of the relationships between his dreams and dream-like fantasies and his writings. I am particularly interested in the dream-story sequences in his diaries which show us how he worked with the materials of his own dreams. In each of these we see how the problem of the dream is taken up in the waking state, and how the elements of the dream are recomposed in the story.

In the example which follows, I employ a method of analysis which requires some justification to begin with. I am committed, of course, to the psychoanalytic principle that a dream or an imaginative work cannot be fully analyzed without the associations of the dreamer or the artist. In these studies of the dream-story sequences, it can be demonstrated that the elements of the story which are re-

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lated to the dream can be regarded as associations to the dream, that is, that the story takes up the dream thoughts, the latent content of the dream, and develops these thoughts in a new composition. (This does not mean of course that the latent *meaning* of the dream is made conscious to the writer, or that the story is an explication of the dream by the writer.) In analyzing the dream-story sequences, I also make use of any other source materials, circumstantial or historical, which have a demonstrable relationship to the content of the dream or the story. When Kafka tells us the circumstances under which the dream is dreamed or the story is written, we can assume a relationship between these circumstances and the production of a dream or a story that can be safely employed in an analytic investigation. We are justified in making the same use of a biographical fact (like the relationship of Kafka to his father) when this information is required for analytic study. Similarly, when Kafka shows preference for a certain type of imagery, we can regard this imagery as over-determined in the psychoanalytic sense and can draw inferences from its use in other writings which we are permitted to employ in the present investigation. So far as possible I have avoided any arbitrary interpretations of symbols.

The Dream of the Letter and the Merchant Messner Sketch

In the diary entry for November 24, 1913 (also during the period of struggle against marriage with F. B.), Kafka records a dream which is followed by a story in which certain elements of the dream are employed. *The dream*:

I am sitting in the garden of a sanatorium at a long table, at the very head, and in the dream I actually see my back. It is a gloomy day, I must have gone on a trip and am in an automobile that arrived a short time ago, driving up in a curve to the front of the platform. They are just about to bring in the food when I see one of the waitresses, a young delicate girl wearing a dress the color of autumn leaves, approaching with a very light or unsteady step through the pillared hall that served as the porch of the sanatorium, and going down into the garden. I don't yet know what she wants but nevertheless point questioningly at myself to learn whether she wants me. And in fact she brings me a letter. But I open it and a great number of thin sheets covered with writing come out, all of them in the strange handwriting. I think, this can't be the letter I'm expecting, it is a very thin letter and a strange,

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thin, unsure handwriting. I begin to read, leaf through the pages and recognize that it must be a very important letter and apparently from F.'s youngest sister. I eagerly begin to read, then my neighbor on the right, I don't know whether man or woman, probably a child, looks down over my arm at the letter. I scream, "No!" The round table of nervous people begins to tremble. I have probably caused a disaster. I attempt to apologize with a few hasty words in order to go on with the reading. I bend over my letter again, only to wake up without resistance, as if awakened by my own scream. With complete awareness I force myself to fall asleep again, the scene reappears, in fact I quickly read two or three more misty lines of the letter, nothing of which I remember, and lose the dream in further sleep.

The story: In the story which follows the dream entry in the diary, the dream details of "a message" and "an interruption" are brought together again. Following is a summary of the sketch:

The old merchant Messner, laboriously ascending the stairs to his room, is confronted by a young man who has stationed himself in a dark corner. The merchant "still groaning from the exertion of his climb" demands to know who this is and what he wants. The young man introduces himself as a student named Kette. He has come to deliver a message to the merchant. The student wishes to discuss the message in Messner's room. Messner obstinately refuses. "I do not receive guests at night." If the student wishes to give him the message, he can give it now, in the hall. The student protests. The merchant dismisses him curtly. He is not interested in the message. "Every message that I am spared is a gain. I am not curious." He enters his room, locks the door upon the protesting Kette. A moment later there is a persistent knocking on the door. "The knocking came the way children at play scatter their knocks over the whole door, now down low, dull against the wood, now up high, clear against the glass." The merchant approaches the door a stick in hand. "Is anyone still out there?" "Yes. Please open the door for me." Messner opens the door and advances toward the student with his stick. "Don't hit me," the student warns him. "Then go!" The merchant points his finger at the stair. "But I can't," said the student and ran up to Messner so surprisingly. . . .

The story breaks off here, just as the dream breaks off at the point, "I have probably caused a disaster" and with the dreamer's hasty apology.

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Certain elements of the dream reappear in the story. In the dream someone, "probably a child," interrupts the reading of the important message, invades the privacy of the dreamer through spying upon the letter. In the story a young student interrupts the old man, creates a disturbance late at night, disturbs the privacy of the merchant. The connection between the child in the dream and the student is further suggested by the knocking on the door in the story which is likened to the knocking of children at play. The antagonists in the dream, the dreamer and a child, become the merchant Messner and the student Kette. The "merchant" is a familiar character in Kafka's writings. He is Kafka's merchant father. *Kette,* chain, might signify the bond which tied Kafka to his father. (See also Kafka's own analysis of the name Georg Bendeman in *The Verdict* in which he identifies *Bende* with bonds, the bonds between father and son. *Diaries,* I, p. 278.) The symbolism becomes clear. The chain, the bonds which tie father and son cannot be severed. Here the link to F. B. in the dream is seen, for Kafka himself understood and explicitly stated in his diaries and his own analysis of *The Verdict* that it was the tie between himself and his father which made marriage with F. B. impossible.

The message in the dream is contained in the letter, but it is a message which is not received, so to speak, because of the interruption. When the dreamer returns to it after waking, he can read a few more "misty lines," none of which he remembers, then loses the dream in further sleep. In the story, too, the message is never delivered. The merchant does not want to hear it. (In both instances the nature of the message is not known.) The letter, the message, seem to belong to the group of "lost communication" symbols in Kafka's writing which were mentioned earlier and are analogous, particularly, to the telephones in *The Castle.* They are failures in human connections, of course, here represented in the dream by the symbol of a letter from a woman and in the story by the message for the man. His life conflict is delineated in these terms. He cannot receive a woman's love (he cannot read the letter in the dream), and he cannot give his love to a man (the thwarted message for Messner in the story).

In examining the connections between the dream and the story, we should give our attention to those details which are most highly charged with feeling. In the dream it is the interruption, the invasion

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of privacy, and the "no" which create anxiety in the dreamer. These details must be highly over-determined in the dream with threads leading to the dream day and current experience and other threads leading back to infantile experience. It is possible that those details represent (among many other things) the conflict over marriage which was uppermost in Kafka's thoughts during this period. For Kafka saw marriage as an invasion of his privacy, "then I'll never be alone again," and an interference with his writing, "But then would it not be at the expense of my writing? Not that, not that!" (Both quotations are from his "Summary of all the arguments for and against my marriage," July 21, 1913.) But also he desired this marriage and in his list of arguments there is one in favor of marriage, "Inability to bear life alone." I think, then, that these thoughts made their way into the dream details. He is "eager" to read the letter which has a connection with F., but "someone" interferes, invades his privacy, and his cry of "no!" is the vehement protest against marriage, the invasion of his privacy, the interference with his work.

But these interpretations would account only for those motives in the dream that are provided by a current conflict. These details must also have threads which lead back into infantile experience. In an early draft of this paper, I attempted to reconstruct a childhood memory from these details which I could not support on any basis except clinical experience in dream interpretation. While such tentative constructions are allowable in psychoanalytic investigation, the test of validation is provided by the live patient or subject of the investigation, i.e., the patient will confirm or not confirm the analyst's construction. In this case, it seemed, the subject of my investigation could never offer the necessary confirmation. His diaries and recollections provided me with nothing more specific for my purposes, and while I thought I found evidence in certain of his writings, the use of imaginative works for "evidence" could bring forth the same criticism as the use of dream details for "evidence." We still don't know if it really happened. So, in this earlier draft I wrote in a tentative construction based on these dream details which read as follows: "The details in the dream suggest a crisis in childhood, an interruption by a child, an invasion of privacy, and a severe prohibition represented by the 'no!,' an early disaster which caused a small child to tremble in fear. (In the dream reversal 'the round table of nervous people

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began to tremble.')" I could not pursue this further and I was also bothered by the fact that the connecting links between the dream details, my reconstruction, and the Messner-Kette story could not be clearly established.

Last year the text of Kafka's "Letter to My Father" was published in full for the first time. In a long outpouring of old griefs and reproaches, there is one memory to which Kafka himself attached the greatest importance and which provided unexpected confirmation of my construction and the connecting links between the dream and the Messner-Kette story.

There is only one episode in the early years of which I have a direct memory. You may remember it, too. Once in the night I kept on whimpering for water, not, I am certain, because I was thirsty, but probably partly to be annoying, partly to amuse myself. After several vigorous threats had failed to have any effect, you took me out of bed, carried me out onto the *pavlatche* (a balcony) and left me there alone for a while in my nightshirt, outside the shut door. I am not going to say this was wrong—perhaps at the time there was really no other way of getting peace and quiet that night—but I mention it as typical of your methods of bringing up a child and their effect on me. I dare say I was quite obedient afterwards at that period, but it did me inner harm. What was for me a matter of course, that senseless asking for water, and the extraordinary terror of being carried outside were two things that I, my nature being what it was, could never properly connect with each other. Even years afterwards I suffered from the tormenting fancy that the huge man, my father, the ultimate authority, would come almost for no reason at all and take me out of bed in the night and carry me out onto the *pavlatche,* and that therefore I was such a mere nothing for him.

This memory has made its way into the dream and the story. I would like to propose from the evidence of Kafka's recorded dreams and his stories that this experience was not the only one in which he disturbed his father at night with disastrous consequences, for the theme of sexual observation occurs repeatedly in Kafka's dreams and his writings. But he is probably truthful in saying that this episode is the only one of his early years of which he has a direct memory, for such infantile sexual scenes as I have inferred from the material ordinarily undergo repression. It is even probable that Kafka's memory

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of the disturbance at night which he describes obtained its dreadful proportions in his child's eyes from an earlier interruption the memory of which was repressed. We would then regard the memory which was retained in consciousness as a screen memory, that is certain qualities of the repressed experience are displaced onto the later, more innocent interruption at night, the one that survives in memory.

But for our purposes here we can work best with the memory which Kafka has given us, the crisis at night which led to the forceful eviction of a small boy and the punishment of being locked out on a balcony. For it is clear that Kafka has written into the Messner-Kette story the scene of this childhood calamity, the disturbance at night which provoked his father's anger. The details are there: the interruption at night, the student's plea to be heard, to deliver the message, the merchant's angry refusal, the locking out of the intruder, the persistent demands of the student, the menacing reappearance of the merchant, with the command to leave, and the student's last protest. With very few changes, the story of the childhood crisis is retold. The conflict between a small boy and his father becomes a conflict between two strangers, an older man and a student, aptly named Messner and Kette. It is a compact statement of the idea that the conflict between father and son persists unchanged in the adult years of the son. The story is unfinished. It breaks off when the merchant commands the student to leave. " 'But I can't,' said the student and ran up to Messner so surprisingly. . . ." We are reminded of the dream now which ends abruptly at the point, "I have probably caused a disaster," and with the dreamer's hasty apology.

Now I think we can understand the relationship between the dream of the letter and the story. It is as if the dreamer takes up the problem of the dream in the waking state, searches for its meaning, and comes up with a memory, an association to one of the dream elements. It is probable that the dream details of the interruption by the child, the cry "No!" and the observation "I have probably caused a disaster," those details which are highly charged with feeling, lead the dreamer's waking associations back to the event in childhood. The story then makes use of the memory, recasts and resets it as the encounter between the merchant Messner and the student Kette.

But then we need to ask, "What is the motive in *writing* the

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story, or, more exactly, in putting this memory into the form of a story?" By doing this Kafka attempts to get rid of the painful effects of this memory through repetition, through experiencing it once again in order to overcome it. He gives the childhood event a second existence in the story. The original conflict led to disaster because the antagonists were a small boy and his powerful father. In the new edition he tries out the event once again with the antagonists a young man and an old and wheezing merchant, as if this time there might be hope for a different outcome. But the young man is defeated by the old man once again as if the problem can find no solution in the imagination either.

We have seen the connection between details in the dream, a memory, and a story, but in reading the story of Messner-Kette we feel that in the process of re-working these details into a story something got lost. There is an emptiness in this story which we cannot immediately account for when we consider its source in a dream and a memory which were highly charged with emotion. Now the effect of this story is certainly intended by Kafka; it is satirical, absurd, and its author is saying, "Here is a spectacle for you! A young man and an aging man are like a small boy and his father, but the old man still has his power and the young man is still a weakling, a child who whimpers at night outside his father's room." But even the irony is weakened in this story by the absence of any emotional quality.

It seems that in the process of utilizing a dream detail and a memory in a story the ideational content was preserved but the emotional content was lost. We have already mentioned as one of the advantages of a conscious fantasy over a dream that the conscious ego can control the quantities of affect and can admit into consciousness only those quantities which can be tolerated. It is even possible for the ego to permit a fantasy or a memory to emerge into consciousness while its accompanying affects are held back by the repressive mechanisms. In this way once painful memories appear in consciousness as empty or disembodied images, ghosts of themselves which hold no real terror because they are not alive, are not animated by the original full charge of energy. Similarly, the grossest, the most naked sensual fantasies can be admitted to conscious expression if they are deprived of their accompanying affects. The quality of the

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mental production is then altered accordingly so that the fantasy seems dead, unreal.

Now this is a quality which appears very strongly in Kafka's writings. Think of the torture in "In the Penal Colony," the scene, "The Whippers," in *The Trial*. The detachment which accompanies these descriptions is the mental quality of the writer who admitted these awful visions into consciousness by making them silent, by anesthetizing the vital parts. Only in this way could he confront his specters without dread. Kafka's people, the people of his stories, are the product of this emotional isolation. They do not live; they imitate the living. They are human abstractions and abstractions of human qualities exactly as dream people are. We could never believe in Kafka's people if we did not take them as dream people and accept Kafka's world as a dream world.

From these ideas on the defenses against affect which Kafka employed in his writing, I think I can also deduce the reasons why so many of his stories are unfinished. Frequently Kafka's stories and sketches break off at the critical moment as a dream breaks off when a signal of danger occurs. It seems probable to me that at those points in Kafka's stories where a strong emotion threatens to break through the defenses, the story breaks off. We never find out what it was that the student Kette was about to do or say at the critical point in the Messner-Kette story. The story breaks off just as the dream breaks off and this may be for the same reasons.

IV

In this example we see how the story takes up the problem of the dream, how the latent dream thoughts are transformed in the waking state and worked into a new composition. The story stands in the same relationship to the dream as a dreamer's waking associations to his dream and its elements can be regarded as associations to the dream. There is this difference, of course: ordinarily when a man pursues his thoughts in relationship to a dream, these thoughts, if they are free associations, will emerge in a formless, chaotic stream. Now Kafka does bind these disordered elements together in a narrative, but the narrative is as indifferent to the conventions of story telling as is the manifest dream. The comparison between these two should

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be closely examined. The latent dream thoughts are themselves disordered fragments and what we call the manifest dream, the "story" of the dream, is the attempt on the part of the dream work to give a semblance of order and coherence to materials which have no logical connections and are governed by primitive thought processes. Freud called this aspect of the dream work "secondary elaboration." The resulting "story" in the dream when considered as a composition is loosely and often indifferently strung together in a narrative which combines its elements without regard for compatibility, temporal sequence, or the boundaries of space. (While many dreams do present an intelligible façade, when we say "like a dream" we usually mean the disordered dream, the absurd dream.)

Kafka's stories, as in the example studied, are associations to the dream and are also composed like the dream. The so-called "dream technique" is like the dream's own method of composition, the process of secondary elaboration. There is no doubt that Kafka deliberately employed this device of the dream for reproducing the effect of the dream in his stories. But I think it is also true, as I mentioned earlier, that his gift in recreating the dream world in his stories derived from illness. I want to emphasize that I do not think Kafka was psychotic, but the danger of psychosis was very real, probably as real as he feared. He never actually lost touch with reality, never lost his citizenship in the real world even when he pronounced himself "a citizen of this other world." His writing must be considered as his strongest bond to the real world and may even be responsible for maintaining his contact with reality.

I think I can support this last statement from certain remarks of Kafka regarding the conditions under which he wrote. If it were not for the sleepless nights he would not write at all, he says. (This should not be taken literally, of course, but it is a fact that most of his writing was the work of these sleepless nights, and we have seen the close connection between these nocturnal fantasies and the anxiety dreams which he warded off through insomnia.) He himself connects his fear of sleep and his fear of death. "Perhaps I am afraid that the soul—which in sleep leaves me—will never return." In psychological terms, he is afraid of sleep because in sleep he loses the self, or awareness of self, and there is the danger that he may not recover it. This is a common fear in severe neuroses, where the danger of losing the self

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and the ties to reality is real. This extreme peril to the ego gives rise in many serious neuroses (and psychoses as well) to creative spells in which the ego attempts to counteract the loosening of its bonds to reality by energetically recreating aspects of the objective world. (Ernst Kris develops this psychoanalytic idea in a group of brilliant essays dealing with the phenomenon of restitution in art.) But the restitutive function of art is not confined to morbid states, and I feel that I am doing this psychoanalytic theory an injustice by introducing it in this context. In Kafka's case, however, we need the clinical observations on restitution in order to explain the function of writing in his neurosis. Only one who is in great danger of losing the self and the real world will fear sleep as Kafka did. This explains why Kafka wrote only of himself. He needed to affirm and reaffirm his uncertain existence in the real world through creating images of himself, through giving himself an existence on paper. In this way his writing preserved his ties to reality.

The problem of art and neurosis is often brought in irrelevantly to the study of a work. In Kafka's writing the problem not only is relevant but intrudes itself into the study of his works. We cannot understand his writing without understanding him, and this must be counted as a failure in the work. The ambiguity of his writing has given rise to a Kafka criticism in which the works have stimulated impressions and fantasies like the ink blots on the Rorschach test. With the publication in recent years of the Kafka notebooks, letters, conversations and miscellaneous pieces, Kafka as Mystic, Kafka as Cabalist, Kafka as Prophet, Kafka as Social Critic, and a large number of other Kafkas have receded, and we are left to read Kafka as Joseph K. and as Gregor Samsa, a man who has less to say about the world he lived in than about the world that lived in him.

Kafka offers himself and his disease as a symbol which exercises an extraordinary attraction in our time. For mental illness is the romantic disease of this age just as tuberculosis was in the past century. His writing is expiation, atonement, an extreme mortification before his human judges, and the bond he creates between himself and his reader is in part the bond of guilt, of unconscious sin. But this does not account for his vogue during the past twenty years. The awe and mysticism which surround the figure of Kafka and his writings bring to mind those feelings which are aroused in us by a premonitory

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dream. When the events of the dream or of inner life are reproduced in the world of reality, we are inclined to endow both the dream and the dreamer with magical and divine qualities. The events of our recent history have appeared to us like the full-scale performance of Kafka's tormented dreams. The peril to our reason has given a significance to Kafka's writings which, we must grant, was not altogether his intention.

Kafka appears, finally, as a crippled writer, a man in whom the disease and the art were united in a kind of morbid love so that neither could set the other free. *"Die Kunst ist für den Künstler ein Leid, durch das er sich für ein neues Leid befreit,"* he said. His writing represented, among other things, an attempt to free himself from neurotic suffering, to repeat and to relive it in order to conquer it. But behind each door with Kafka there was another door, as in the imagery of the legend "Before the Law." An unending chain of events led backward into earliest times, and the conquest of danger and of suffering was a succession of battles in which a new enemy grew in the spot of the last one vanquished, and the new enemy was only a replica of the one who came before.

The disease which produced extraordinary dreams exerted its morbid influence on the creative process as well. The striving for synthesis, for integration and harmony which are the marks of a healthy ego and a healthy art are lacking in Kafka's life and in his writings. The conflict is weak in Kafka's stories because the ego is submissive; the unequal forces within the Kafka psyche create no tension within the reader, only a fraternal sadness, an identification between a writer and reader which takes place in the most solitary regions of the ego.

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POEMS

LINES: I PRAISE GOD'S MANKIND IN AN OLD WOMAN

I praise God's mankind in an old woman:
I hear him rattle the body of an old wife
Dry and brown, and bitter as bracken,
Her stalk womb-canceled, sere with seedgone;
With shrivel fingers clutching upon her life,
Wrestling for the empty pod and the dry leaf.
But still in her mildewed eyes moist's last token—
But oh, ever in her eyes the flash and strife,
Husk edge, cruel and sharp as any knife
Which not God's death itself can unsharpen.
Not all the frosts marching to this last March
Frost, not all the suns flaming to August
The last, dry-dried her spirit to adust;
She her own frost and sun at last must
Fetch—to blaze within and her soul's spirit parch
Into a desert—her own contracted flame;
Her radical sin, this sin at last to tame.
May she like the fathers by the desert broken
In her own desert find at last salvation.

Wilfred Watson

DUMB DICK

This fugue must be hummed, found
As the wind fumbles, all thumbs.
What drops toward the furred stones,
Founders? Here is a hole in the wind;

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Here, nothing! But look, look at our loves
Hung over nothing, hung on the wind's
Rupture—oiled with our selves, sick
On that fool's honey. Dear, only Dumb
Dick glistens, up early, early.
It is always early in that blunt head,
Early to learn, all thunder, all thumbs,
The diving to where we will be dead,
Although living.

Love seethes to suds, seed runs
Like whey in the raveled vein.
Dumb Dick stands alone, or shrunken
Sleeps. No matter. More than the stunned
Wonder matters; more counts than who comes.
We stumble past coming toward colder
Turnings: the turning in the dark to wheeze,
The head turning as the penned blood stutters,
The cold floor under the spent wonder
Turning, and the learning we are old
Turning like returning thunder.
Love, I will not be done dying,
I will not lie dead.

Leslie A. Fiedler

LETTER TO THE TIMES

Sir, I have various complaints to make.
The roses, first. When they are ripped
from the earth expiring, we sigh for them
prescribe tap-water, aspirin and salt.
But when we lie down under the same earth
in a dry silly box, do they revive us?
Their odor of rose-ghosts does not change
at all and they continue to call out

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in their red and white morse the old old
messages as if nothing had happened. Again
consider trees. My God the impresario
trees. Just try, Sir, just try to cut one down
in Fitzjohn's Avenue at three o'clock
in the ordinary afternoon. You will be
prosecuted. Soon the Householders will arrange
themselves into a deranged mob. They'll grow
Hitler mustaches, Mussolini chins. Frightful,
and write oathy letters to the Council,
naming you *tree-criminal.* Yet tell me, when
the bombs met their shadows in London,
amidst the ruins of voices, did one tree, just one
tree write an angry note in its sly green ink?
No, they only dropped faded tears in autumn
selfishly thinking of their own hamadryads. . . .
BUSINESS AS USUAL was and is their trite
slogan. Away then with trees and roses.
They are inhuman. Away also with rivers:
The disgusting Ganges bleeding from Brahma's
big toe; the Rubicon cause of a Civil War;
the Acheron, River of Sorrows—Tiber that drowned
Horatius the One-Eyed, the sweating Rhone,
Rhine, Don, and the vulgar Volga, not to
mention the garrulous Mississippi with its
blatant river-smell. Even the English
rivers can do no more than reflect inverted
values, turn chaste swans upside down
like so many flies on the roof of the waters.
Swans however, *cannot* swim upside down.
At least I have never seen them. Is this distortion
of truth deliberate? Has ever one river,
one river, Sir, written eulogies of waterfalls
to plead for the reprieve of Mankind? And stars,
so indifferent and delinquent, stars which we have
decorated with glittering adjectives more numerous
than those bestowed on Helen's eyes—do they

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warn us when they fall? Not a hint.
Not a star-wink. They are even too lazy
to shine when we are most awake. Creatures
of Night they are probably up to amoral
purposes. You can't trust a star, that's sure.
So when the greenfly is in the rose
and the dragonfly drops its shadow in the river,
when the axe hides in the tree with its listening
shriek and clouds gag the starlight
with gray handkerchiefs—I contend, Sir,
that we should pity them no more,
but concern ourselves with more natural things.

Dannie Abse

DEATH OF A JAZZ MUSICIAN

I dreamed that when I died a jukebox played,
And in the metal slots bright coins were laid;
Coins on both my eyes lay cold and bright
As the boatman ferried my thin shade into the night.

I dreamed a jukebox played. I saw the flame
Leap from a whirling disk which bore my name,
Felt fire like music sweep the icy ground—
And forward still the boatman moved, and made no sound.

William Jay Smith

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Mary McCarthy

THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF IBSEN

GINA. Wasn't that a queer thing to say—that he'd like to be a dog?
HEDWIG. I tell you what, Mother. I think he meant something else by that.
GINA. What else could he mean?
HEDWIG. Well, I don't know; but it was as though he meant something else all the time—and not what he said.

This short catechism—from the second act of *The Wild Duck*—is at first sight only a sort of road sign to the audience to look out for curves ahead. Hjalmar Ekdal's wife and daughter are discussing his friend, Gregers, the meddling fanatic who has inserted himself into the family speaking a dark language and pressing what he calls the claim of the ideal. In the scene just before he has expressed the wish to be a dog—an "extraordinarily clever dog. The kind that goes to the bottom after wild duck when they dive down and bite fast hold of the weeds and the tangle down in the mud." Translated out of this idiom into plain speech, this means that he sees himself as the rescuer of the household which his father (the hunter) has wounded and sent down into the depths. These depths, ironically, are located in an attic, where Hjalmar, who plays the flute and has a windy, "artistic" personality, also plays at being a professional photographer and inventor while his wife does the hard work. In the neighboring garret room, behind a curtain, Hjalmar's disgraced, drunken old father, wearing a brown wig and his lieutenant's uniform, plays at being a hunter with an old double-barreled pistol, some barnyard fowls, pigeons, rabbits, and a real wild duck. Father and son "go hunting" in this make-believe forest, which is rather like photographers' scenery. Hedwig, the percipient little girl, who is not Hjalmar's real daughter but the illegitimate child of Gregers' father, is going blind. This blindness is a metaphor for the state of darkened self-deception in which the little family lives. Gregers believes that he has the duty to *open Hjalmar's eyes* to the true facts of his marriage. At the house of Gregers' father, who is also losing his sight, they are drinking Tokay wine and playing Blind Man's Buff.

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In short, as Hedwig indicates to her uninstructed mother, the dramatist means something else all the time and not what he says. Everything, Hedwig precociously understands, is symbolic. The real wild duck is the child, Hedwig, who picks up Gregers' "loaded" suggestion and shoots herself. The tragic climax of *The Wild Duck* is brought about, thus, by an act of over-interpretation. Gregers, for once, was speaking literally when he said to the little girl: "But suppose, now, that you of your own free will, sacrificed the wild duck for *his* sake?" But Hedwig, confused and terrified the next morning by her supposed father's harshness, thinks that she has finally grasped Gregers' undermeaning and, presuming that she is the "sacrifice" alluded to, goes into the garret room and puts the pistol to her breast.

This ending, like so many of Ibsen's dramatic finales ("The mill race! The mill race!"), seems a little heavy and strained, like the last crashing chords of movie music. Yet it is utterly just. The child's suggestibility has a semantic grounding. She has been led by the Higher Critics around her to look for the real reality under the surface of language—that is, to schematize her life as she lives it. Gregers, with his "claim of the ideal," Hjalmar, with his talk of "a task in life," are both inveterate schematizers, one a truth-speaker, the other an aesthetician. As his wife says of Hjalmar, "Surely you realize, Mr. Werle, that my husband isn't one of those ordinary photographers." Everything has conspired to make Hedwig distrust the *ordinary* way of looking at things. In a peculiarly sinister scene in the third act, Gregers has been talking to Hedwig about the garret room where the wild duck lives. She tells him that sometimes the whole room and all the things in it seem to her like "the ocean's depths," and then she adds: "But that's so silly."

GREGERS. No, you mustn't say that.
HEDWIG. It is; because it's only an attic.
GREGERS (*looking hard at her*). Are you so sure of that?
HEDWIG (*astonished*). That it's an attic?
GREGERS. Yes. Do you know that for certain?
(*Hedwig is silent, looking at him with an open mouth.*)

Gregers preaches mysteries. Hjalmar's daily conversation is a flow of oratory. He always speaks of his brown-wigged bald father as "the white-haired old man." And his pretended "purpose in life" is a sort of parody of Gregers' "purpose to live for." He too conceives of himself as a savior, the rescuer of his father. "Yes, I will rescue that ship-wrecked man. For he was ship-wrecked when the storm broke loose on him. . . . That pistol there, my friend—the one we use to shoot rabbits with—it has played its part in the tragedy of the House of Ekdal." Again, a flight

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of metaphors, more disjointed and *ad libitum* in Hjalmar's case, a fact which points to the difference between the two rhetoricians. Hjalmar improvises idly on the instrument of language, but Gregers is in earnest, with his single unifying metaphor, of the duck and the bird dog and the hunter, which he pursues to the fearful end.

The men are poet-idealists; Hedwig is a budding poetess. Gina, the uneducated wife, belongs to the prosy multitude that was patronized earlier in the century by Wordsworth: "A primrose by the river's brim, A yellow primrose was to him. And it was nothing more." "That there blessed wild duck," she exclaims. "The fuss there is over it!" When Gregers, true to his metaphor, speaks of the "swamp vapor" that is morally poisoning the Ekdal household, Gina retorts: "Lord knows there's no smell of swamps here, Mr. Werle; I air the place out every blessed day."

The Wild Duck was written in the middle of Ibsen's career, after *Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, Ghosts, An Enemy of the People* and before the sequence of plays beginning with *Rosmersholm.* Ibsen regarded it as a departure from his earlier work, and it is often taken to be a satiric repudiation of "the Ibsenites" or even of Ibsen himself as a crusading social dramatist. In the figure of Gregers Werle, an ugly man in a countrified gray suit who appears on his mission of truth to rip the veil of illusion from a satisfied household, it is certainly possible to see a cruel self-portrait of the dramatic author who sought to "let in the air" on the stuffy Norwegian community, to expose its hypocrisy and commercial chicanery, its enslavement to a notion of duty and to a sentimentalized picture of family life. Gregers Werle's harping on the concept of "a true marriage," which shall not be based on lies and concealment, is certainly a mocking echo of the doctrines of *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House.* Moreover, Gregers Werle has been a radical before the opening of the play, and Ibsen, though he was a stock figure of respectability in private life, looked upon himself as a radical, even an anarchist, and throughout his plays, up to the very end, there is a doctrinal insistence on freedom and the necessity of self-realization that today has a somewhat period and moralistic flavor, as though the notion of duty, reappearing in the guise of Duty to Oneself, had become, if anything, more puritan, more rigid, more sternly forbidding, than the notion of duty to God or family or bourgeois custom. If Gregers Werle is Ibsen in his tendentious and polemical aspect, then indeed he is a demon that Ibsen is trying to cast out through the exorcism of this play—a grotesque and half-pathetic demon, in that he will never under-

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stand anything concrete, a demon, in fact, of abstraction who bursts into the play with his ugly face and ugly name like some parochial incorruptible Robespierre whose activities are circumscribed by a sad fate to the reform of a single bohemian family. But if Gregers Werle represents the demand for truth in its ultimate, implacable form, then the message of the play is, as some critics have said, cynical and nihilistic, since the converse of Gregers is a Dr. Relling, a lodger downstairs who believes that lies and illusions are necessary to human survival.

A softer reading of Ibsen's intention suggests that Gregers represents only the eternal interfering busybody, but this reduces the play to a platitude—an object-lesson in what happens when an outsider tries to tell married people how to run their lives. Shaw's opinion was that Gregers is simply a particularly dangerous case of idealism and duty on the rampage, and according to Shaw's thesis Ibsen spent his life doing doughty battle against the joint forces of duty and idealism—the vested interests of the day. But Ibsen was a more divided nature than Shaw allowed for, and the battle was within.

Ibsen is not an attractive personality, and his work has, intermittently, a curious confessional closet-smell, as though he were using his play-writing as a form of psychotherapy. This is especially noticeable in *The Master Builder,* where the hero is Ibsen in a symbolic disguise. The master builder (read sound dramatic craftsman) has first built churches (the early poetic plays), then houses for people to live in (the social dramas), and is finally erecting houses with steeples (the late, symbolic plays). This hero, Master Solness, is very darkly motivated; there has been a fire, years ago, through which, indirectly, he and his wife lost their children, but which, at the same time, permitted him to start on his successful career as a builder and real-estate developer. Now he is obsessed with jealousy of younger men in his profession, and he is suffering from a failure of nerve, which is connected with the fire, perhaps, or with his wife's compulsive sense of duty and her invalidism or with his abandonment of church architecture. The play is strangely thin, more like a scenario with several writers contributing suggestions in a story conference than like a finished play, and throughout its jerky development, there is a sense of something elusive, as though Ibsen, again, like Gregers Werle, meant something else all the time and not what he said. There is the same odd feeling in *Rosmersholm,* which is full of disjointed references, like the talk of an insane person—what are those white horses, really, and what is the mill race, and what is that quest for total innocence, on which the play seems to turn and yet not to turn?

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The idea of guilt for some sin of the past, a sin, even, of the fathers, plays a great part in Ibsen. Like many of his characters, he has a secret in his early life—a poor girl whom he got in trouble and left to fend for herself. Hereditary disease, illegitimacy, the death of children haunt the Ibsen world; they are all in *The Wild Duck.* In the early plays, the guilt or the sin is localized; we know what the protagonist has done, in the past, which will spring the trap on him. But in the later plays, starting with *Rosmersholm,* the guilt has become diffuse, and it is no longer clear what is the matter. A kind of corny symbolism replaces the specific fact in the mechanism of the plot—white horses, steeples, trolls, a sailor, a mermaid, and the sea and a ring. And these symbols, which are only vague portents, correspond to a vague ache or yearning in the breasts of the principal characters, who talk about themselves distractedly, as though they were relating their symptoms in a session of group analysis. *Hedda Gabler* is an exception; next to *The Wild Duck,* it is Ibsen's most successful play. Hedda does not discuss herself; the General's daughter is too haughty for that. Instead, she behaves, and the subject of the play is visibly present, as it was in *The Doll's House,* as it still is in *The Wild Duck.* Her suicide at the end is less convincing than her burning of the manuscript, and her burning of the manuscript is less convincing than the transfixing moment in the first act when she pretends to think that the aunt's new hat, lying on the sofa, is the servant's old bonnet. But Ibsen is not very good at making big events happen; he is better at the small shocking event, the psychopathology of everyday life: Hedda and her husband's aunt's hat, Nora, when she nonchalantly pushes off the sewing on her poor widowed friend, Christine, Hjalmar, when he talks himself into letting Hedwig with her half-blind eyes do his retouching for him so that he can go off and play hunter with his father in the attic, Hjalmar cutting his father at the Werle soirée, Hjalmar eating butter obliviously while his hungry daughter watches him. These are the things one knows oneself to be capable of. If the larger gestures are less credible in Ibsen, this is possibly because of his very success in the realistic convention, which implies a norm of behavior on the part of its guilty citizens within their box-like living rooms. The realistic convention requires credibility, that is, a statistical norm; the audience must believe that the people on the stage are more or less like themselves, no worse and no better, in short, that they are ordinary, restrained by cowardice or public opinion from stooping too low or rising too high. The sense of credibility becomes more and more highly developed—a sensitized measuring instrument—as a society becomes more homogeneous and parochial and less stratified in terms of class.

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But this very ordinariness, this exaction of truth to life, is a limitation on an artist, especially on one with "titanic" ambitions, like Ibsen. And this is where symbolism enters, as a device to deepen or heighten the realistic drama while keeping it within the frame of the three-wall stage. Symbolic thinking was already natural to him, as *Peer Gynt* and *Brand* indicate. Here, however, it was used in the old-fashioned way, to sustain a philosophical argument, that is, to make abstractions concrete and visible, with the text of the play serving as a kind of libretto to the music of the thought behind it. But starting with *Pillars of Society,* Ibsen began to reverse the process—to make the concrete abstract, in the "coffin-ships," whose rotting hulls are supposed to symbolize the whole of Norwegian society. But the temptation of this new, allusive method (the method described by Hedwig in the passage quoted) was that it led to grandiosity and cunning or more precisely, to the kind of schematic thinking exemplified by Gregers Werle, this schematic thinking being really a form of God-identification, in which the symbolist imposes on the concrete, created world his own private design and lays open to question the most primary facts of existence, i.e., whether an attic is "really" an attic or is not in fact a swamp or something else. The allusive, hinting language employed by Gregers is the language of all messianic individuals and interfering, paranoid prophets. And like Hjalmar's sentimental flow of metaphor, it is the language of bad art, art that is really religion or edification. This type of symbolism is often found in sermons and in addresses by college presidents, who liken the institution to a ship, themselves to the pilot at the helm, etc.

Ibsen sees all this in Gregers, and he sees, furthermore, that Gregers is incurable. In his last speech of the play, Gregers has merely shifted metaphors: "GREGERS (*looking in front of him*). In that case, I am glad my destiny is what it is. RELLING. May I ask—what *is* your destiny? GREGERS (*on the point of going*). To be thirteenth at table." This cryptic and portentous remark means something more than it says, evidently—either that the speaker is going to commit suicide or that he sees himself from henceforth as the odd, unassimilable man, the bird of ill omen, and that he finds a mysterious satisfaction in the picture.

Odious, baneful creature. And yet one cannot throw off the feeling that Gregers is something more than a repudiation of an earlier stage in the author's development. As in *The Master Builder,* where Solness is fond of likening himself fatly to a troll, there is a sense of confession here which lingers in that last remark and far from rounding off the play leaves it hanging, like an unanswered doubt. The fact is, in any case, that Ibsen, if he did unburden himself of a certain amount of

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self-dislike through the medium of Gregers, did not follow this up with any reforms. Quite the contrary. In the light of the later plays, this confession appears as a sort of indulgence bought for all future sins. The wild duck in the attic is revived as the carp in the pond of *The Lady from the Sea,* and here it is the *sympathetic* characters who moralize on the comparison. The pietistic talk of a "task" or a "purpose in life," which has already been heard in *A Doll's House,* is not silenced by the pistol shot in *The Wild Duck*; it breaks out again, irrepressibly, in *Rosmersholm,* in *The Lady from the Sea,* and even in *Hedda Gabler*; once more it is the sympathetic characters who voice the notions of Gregers and Hjalmar and who allegorize themselves out of existence. The plays grow more grandiose as the symbolic content inflates them, and the scenery changes to cliffs and mountain tops that evoke the painted canvas settings of Hjalmar's photographic studio.

No doubt there is a good deal of bathetic "studio" art in all the great late nineteenth-century writers, with the exception of Tolstoy. It is in Dickens and George Eliot and Dostoevsky, certainly; they paid for being titans and for the power to move a mass audience by a kind of auto-intoxication or self-hypnosis that allowed them to manipulate their emotions like a stage hand cranking out a snowstorm from a machine containing bits of paper. This effect of false snow falling on a dramatic scene is more noticeable in Ibsen than in any of his great coevals, and he left it as his legacy to the American school of playwrights, to O'Neill and now Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge. (Shaw, who considered himself indebted to Ibsen, never learned anything from him, for he did not work in the realistic convention, though he may not always have been aware of the fact.) If Ibsen's followers are not better than they are, this may be partly because the master, compared to the great architect-novelists of his period, was only a master builder. The "Freudian" character of his symbols has often been remarked upon, and perhaps his most important contribution was clinical: he was the first to put a neurotic woman—Hedda, Ellida Wangel, Mrs. Solness, Nora—on the stage.

But his work, viewed as a whole, seems at once repetitive and inchoate. Twice in *Hedda Gabler* and *The Wild Duck,* he created a near-masterpiece. The rest of his career appears as a series of false starts and reverses in an interior conversation that keeps lapsing into reverie. The goal of all Ibsen's heroes and heroines—self-realization—looms throughout his plays like one of his symbolic mountain peaks, which the toiling author himself could never reach.

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PARIS LETTER

THE NEW FRENCH SENSE OF REALITY

Dear Editors,

You want to know what is going on here? Well, so do I. My daily work, as it happens, provides me with only too handy an excuse for blackening my fingers, my face, and my soul with newsprint. I ruffle up some twenty-five or thirty odd periodicals—mostly newspapers—each day. Dozens of weeklies, reviews, *plaquettes,* and illustrated magazines pile up at my bedside and involve themselves in my nightmares. I gad about a great deal too, nocturnally, diurnally, and of course, crepuscularly, developing hepatitis and a sort of perpetual contained sub-apoplexy at cocktails, receptions, and dinner parties. Why? My work requires that I be informed, whatever that means, but one does not have to be excessively disenchanted to realize that most of one's duties are also one's excuses. Do you want to know how the town has reacted to René Clair's new film? I can tell you. To the eerie exhibit of Etruscan art at the Louvre? Or the equally eerie—Byzantine—pre-electoral maneuvers of the National Assembly? Just ask me. Everybody's repeating jokes about a mythical rich bitch, *très parisienne,* named Marie-Chantal, and her friends Ghislaine and Gérard, whilst controversy rages over one Minou Drouet, aged eight, whose alleged poems have been privately printed by Julliard, as if Françoise Sagan weren't enough; and this has led one of the weeklies to print a cartoon showing a mother demurely retiring from company with her babe in arms because, she says, "It's time for his little poem." The point is, Life Goes On. The salons are buzzing about Anouilh's new play, and Cocteau has had his grotesque apotheosis, delivering his inaugural speech at the Académie Française in honor of Jérôme Tharaud, a third-rate anti-Semitic author of travel books. The Academic reception committee, by the way, deleted from the speech the sulphurous name of Jean Genet, who has just been sentenced to eight months in prison for publishing an obscure and intolerably obscene poem (illustrated by Leonor Fini) on the adventures of a divine little sailor in Brest.

The only mystery is why you should care. Unless it be that the whole world is in need of excuses and Paris, despite everything, continues

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to be a central source of supply. *Despite everything*: there is a sort of implicit Copernican revolution in the disquiet, the uncertainty, the defensiveness of this little phrase. The world's sense of Paris, the French sense of the world, are changing, and therefore have changed irremediably. And this is crucial. Saving all reverence to Marie-Chantal and Minou Drouet, this is what is really going on.

Please note that a new awareness is a poor excuse for old simplifications; and if you are tempted to reduce what is happening here to some familiar scheme of rise and fall, growth and decadence, I beg you to proceed on your own. That is not what I mean at all. If there is anything hopeful and even youthful in the present French cultural situation, it is a growing willingness, precisely, to see it plain. Only this means facing up to an old sentimental confusion which has been built into the French psyche by generations of free, universal, and compulsory education, administered in school and out of it by stout anti-clerical masters, good Republicans all.

What happens then? The French intellectuals have identified themselves more profoundly than any others in the West with their country, its power and prestige in the world. This is why the altered power situation of France, which was not so much caused by the war as revealed by it, becomes a theme of endless lamentations for Simone de Beauvoir's pseudo-revolutionary Mandarins. We are no longer in the center of things, they keep moaning, we've lost our Mission. Our country no longer counts. The implication seems to be that these great spirits cannot waste themselves on a second-rate country. Well, happily for the Mandarins, there is another Nation and a new Mission, and the Communists are waiting in the wings to explain, with the help of the Diamat, that the old clerkish nationalism still has a role to play providing it transforms itself into its own negation. In other words, the proper way to serve France, nowadays, is to betray France.

There are more intelligent reactions, of course, and more original ones, to which relatively little attention has been paid. Why? The anguish of the Mandarinate is *ideological*, and perhaps this explains why the outer world, having been bereft of France during the four years of German occupation, has followed the soap operas of the revolutionary intellectuals with such breathless interest since the war. What was the deep inner conflict which cast a shadow over Merleau-Ponty's high brow? Why did Simone de Beauvoir suffer so long in silence? And what were the causes of the rupture between Sartre and Camus . . .? The French themselves are no longer able to muster such excitement. Which is not to say that the thousands of little pressure groups,

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smallholders, and special interests who combine their lobbies and deputies to paralyze every attempt to renovate the antiquated structures of French society are, like their eighteenth-century ancestors, unaware of the potential explosiveness of ideas; but rather that the ideas of the Mandarins are so reassuring in the end. And even if there were some nervousness in the Quai d'Orsay's Cultural Relations Department, it must surely have been put to rest by Simone de Beauvoir's *Mandarins*. A part of this interminable novel is devoted to the sort of close analysis of the heroine's sex life for which the author prepared so strenuously in *Le Deuxième Sexe*; but all the rest consists of ideological discussion in a never-never land where the real problems of France—inflation, the tax system, the new constitution, European integration, etc.—simply do not exist. The only problem is to define one's position with respect to the Revolution, which has acquired an irritating Russian accent without ceasing to be—shades of Clemenceau!—*un bloc*.

Just as the French Communist Party, by neutralizing some five million protest votes, insures that France will continue to be governed by a right-center coalition, the prestige of the ideologists has had the effect of sterilizing the literary intellectuals in the one country of the Western world where they might have been expected to assume an effective political role. But this is less because the Mandarins have whored after strange gods—only a small number of them, after all, have followed Sartre into the arms of Khrushchev and Mao—than because they have remained so desperately faithful to the millenarian Jacobinism of their tradition. Edward Shils, in his penetrating summary of the proceedings of the Congress for Cultural Freedom at Milan, was able to proclaim the "end of ideology," by which he meant, I take it, that intellectuals are tending these days, in political and sociological matters, to know what they are talking about. But it is significant that this was one encounter of writers which the French press failed to publicize in the usual manner, i.e., comparably to the way in which our own might have treated a congress of Hollywood stars. That the literary stars might abandon ideology in favor of a concrete intelligence, say, of economics, is a rather improbable prospect in this country. And perhaps a disquieting one, too. One can just see old Herriot, a writer himself, removing his pipe from his mouth and grumbling, *"Où irions-nous?"*

A measure of the resistance to such an idea is afforded by the reception, here, of Herbert Lüthy's *La France à l'Heure de son Clocher* (published in the U. S. as *France Against Herself*). Lüthy is a Swiss historian and journalist who writes in German with an exasperated love for his subject, an indefatigable, grappling, convoluted love which seems

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to have escaped the French entirely. His book is a brilliant account of the historical background, the economy, and the social structure of post-war France; and, in view of the fact that no other such work exists, so far as I have been able to discover, in any language, one might have expected it to be received with some fanfare and seriously discussed. Nothing of the sort happened. In fact, I am rather at a loss to say precisely what did happen, although I have inquired assiduously about me, like La Fontaine fresh from his discovery of Baruch. I even went to a meeting organized by the review *Preuves,* which confronted Lüthy with Max Richard of "Federation" and a couple of Monnet Plan economists, i.e., the sort of people who proceed, in their own critique of French society, in a most "un-French"—meaning anti-ideological—manner. But Lüthy's interlocutors spent the evening caviling at details and the air was heavy with reprobation, politely repressed. One might have supposed that Jean Fourastié, or Alfred Sauvy, or at least Raymond Aron, those Keynesian voices in the literary-ideological wilderness, who spend their lives trying to teach their compatriots what every English schoolboy knows about productivity, inflation and competition, would have clasped Lüthy to their respective bosoms. But no. Aron, the one French intellectual who, with Bertrand de Jouvenel, went to Milan to help put an "end to ideology," has made so far as I know only one public allusion to Lüthy's book; and that was a rather ungenerous remark in a recent *Figaro* article, to the effect that a foreign journalist (unnamed) had recently taken the trouble to assemble in a single volume all the criticisms which the French are constantly making of themselves.

I must urge you to read Lüthy's book, not only as the best available study of contemporary France but as a case history in our own cultural predicament. French resistance to economic and social change, as Lüthy shows, is aided and abetted by the pseudo-revolutionary Mandarins, who will compromise for nothing less than the Apocalypse, although they are not sure what that means. But meanwhile the postwar investment programs are beginning to produce their effects, there has been a striking reversal of the demographic trend, and after decades of frustration and disaster, there is a perspective, straight ahead, which could truly revolutionize French society. This, succinctly stated, is the prospect of an expanding economic system, capable of housing, feeding, and clothing an expanding population. It probably implies a large degree of European integration, if not actual federation, as well as certain changes in the ancient educational system, along with a democratization of culture and a general acceleration of that process which the beneficiaries of the old

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aristocratic humanism gloomily see at work all about them. "Americanization" is what they sometimes call it, and the problem is whether and in what forms the old way of life and the old culture can survive. A familiar problem, no? But it attains its full measure of pathos in this country whose very vocation—since population figures and gross national product have scarcely changed since 1929—has seemed to set it against the modern world.

Here we return, oddly enough, to what has really been going on. It is chiefly in terms of material power, after all, that France has ceased to be in the center of things; and even in those terms the picture has always been and continues to be more complicated than the view from the Eiffel Tower. The Mandarins, those paladins of the spirit, may have adopted Stalin's view to the effect that if you have no armored divisions you simply don't count; but our own government has constantly allowed itself, and for the most part happily, to be argued or maneuvered into following the French line in Europe. This has not prevented every ministry since 1947 from being copiously denounced as a tool of Wall Street, but the fact remains that the Brussels Pact, N.A.T.O., the Paris Agreements in their final form, the E.D.C., the Schuman Plan and even, to some extent, the O.E.E.C., and the pattern of Marshall Aid were largely French conceptions.

At this point, in any event, A.D. 1955, at the winter solstice, prices are stabilized and the moral rot of inflation (cf. Marcel Aymé's *Chemin des Ecoliers* and, for that matter, so much of French "manners" writing since the First World War) seems to have been stopped. The postwar hopelessness is lifting like fog, despite the usual political mess, and the Mandarins—much diminished in numbers and influence after the apostasies and schisms of the past few years—are leaving the center of the stage. In short, as I suggested earlier in this letter, there are new forces at work and it is time some attention was paid them.

I should like to mention two of these new forces which, although they seem on the surface to have little in common except their suspicion and dislike for each other, actually bear a similar, tangential, off-center and profoundly novatory relation to the old French *Weltanschauungen.*

The first of these is the European Movement, so called, a rough blanket of a phrase covering a number of badly beaten bodies. Until the E.D.C. debacle, in fact, the blanket covered practically everyone, for the "Europeans" were paradoxically in power in the key countries of Western Europe and these countries were all officially committed to a series of integrating operations, political as well as economic, which

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were to lead to a federal union. Our own government, by the way, did everything it could to facilitate these operations; and the British, for once, at least refrained from sabotaging them. The story's been told of how the whole thing came a cropper; and the Saar vote of November 1955 was merely a small echo to the mighty crash of August 1954. But the point I would make here is that behind or within the official European movements of the politicians there were and are small bands of irreducibles who are bound to play their role when the next great crisis—economic collapse or military danger—drives the politicians from their comfortable national routines again.

These irreducibles tend to be university professors rather than literary people as such (although this distinction, it should be understood, is less sharp in France than elsewhere in Europe). There seems to be too little ideology in European federation to attract the literary people, and too much boring preoccupation with coal, steel, transports, trade liberalization, currency convertibility, etc. But even in France, where all the demons of the past were conjured up at once to destroy the E.D.C., the atmosphere—except in those milieux which are subject to Communist influence—remains favorable to the European project. There are even some nonacademic writers of the older generation—Jules Romains, André Siegfried, Bertrand de Jouvenel—who have associated themselves actively with one or another of the European organizations; and two of the liveliest and best of the newer literary reviews, *Preuves* and *Monde Nouveau,* have undertaken the task of presenting the whole enterprise in the proper—ideological?—language, so that even the average French intellectual can understand.

I hope to have occasion later to go into all this at greater length, for the various pro-integrationist groupings constitute, with their personalities and their publications, an apparently feeble, half-submerged, but surely significant reaction to what is really going on. None of the Western European nations is capable, by itself, of marshaling the necessary resources to create a full-scale atomic energy industry, and that fact alone is enough to suggest that, if Europe is to recover anything like its former role in the world—a proviso which I persist in considering as of some importance to our own cultural future—the era of the small nations must be drawing to an end.

The "Europeans," coming as they do from practically all the non-Communist groupings, are inevitably divided on questions of tactics and strategy and even on the fundamental one of just how much integration they wish to achieve. But they are united, at this writing, in their suspicion of Pierre Mendès-France, whose government allowed the E.D.C.

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to be strangled in August 1954. There is a paradox in this, although few Frenchmen are aware of it, for P.M.F. is intellectually if not temperamentally well disposed to European integration, and it was only his grim vendetta against Bidault and the M.R.P. which, by forcing him to seek Gaullist and "moderate" allies, gave his whole movement an anti-European cast. Most people have forgotten that in 1936, when he first rose from parliamentary ranks as one of Léon Blum's junior ministers, Mendès-France published a book happily predicting the eventual economic and political federation of Europe. A few of today's Europeans, by the way, notably the extreme right-wing fringe around Fabre-Luce's weekly, *Rivarol,* were fervent admirers of Hitler and Mussolini in those days; and it is rather odd to watch them slip into the old anti-Semitic leer when they denounce Mendès (always without the *France*) as a reactionary nationalist. All of which proves something, I'm sure, but the point I'm insidiously getting at is that the ferment around P.M.F. is a complicated phenomenon, full of hidden gimmicks and capable of altering the atmosphere considerably in the course of the next few years. For this is not a merely political ferment.

Throughout most of the country, Mendès-France appears as a thoroughly *radical* politician in a new style, i.e., he seems to provide a new rhetoric (inevitably derived from the old revolutionary slogans) for the familiar provincial conservatism; which is the sort of combination the great Radicals have always achieved. But in Paris, the movement around P.M.F. has been boiling and swirling with a dozen different —and specifically Parisian—currents, and the influence of these may end by generating more social and cultural energy than any non-Communist movement since the war. To describe this confluence would be to explain how Paris—our glittering village—mingles the milieux of government, theater, literature, Sorbonne, journalism, and business; and that, alas, would require nothing less than a *Comédie Humaine.* . . . But at least I can tell you about *L'Express.*

L'Express began as a weekly journal of opinion, some months before Mendès-France came to power in 1954. It was organized and edited by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, youngest member of a dynasty which has built a fortune on a solid, conservative financial newspaper called *Les Echos.* From the very beginning, the new weekly, whose political leaders were P.M.F. and François Mitterand, was a source of scandal, and its success was assured when the Interior Minister of the Laniel government seized one issue for publishing an allegedly secret document on Indochina. Shortly after Mendès-France formed his government, the editorial board moved—literally—into the Quai d'Orsay;

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and out again, more in sorrow than in anger, when the government began to lose its breath, as all French governments must, from pushing at the Sisyphan rock of the National Assembly. Having returned to the back benches, Mendès-France and his friends, under the benevolent if slightly clouded eye of old Herriot, proceeded to take over the Radical Party in preparation for the 1956 elections. The new radicalism needed a daily organ and *L'Express* was ready to hand. There was a brief fund-raising campaign and, while Paris held its breath, *L'Express* became a daily.

Paris held its breath because the enterprise was risky and "everybody," whatever he thought of Mendès-France, suddenly discovered that he had some interest in the success or failure of this little newspaper. The point is that *L'Express* had and continues to have a peculiar relation to that ubiquitous freemasonry, the worldly "everybody" of Paris. It titillates, irritates, outrages, ravishes; but, above all, it belongs.

Does that sound invidious? I'm sorry. We are a long way from the rustic old *bien de chez nous* air of the Radical Party and—who knows?—we may even be departing from ideology itself. And that is why I believe that the movement around *L'Express* may turn out to be a truly original reaction to what is really going on. The paper is not very good and its circulation, I've been told, has fallen disastrously after the first few days. It may scarcely survive the elections which, as I write this letter, Edgar Faure is organizing into a series of elephant-traps for Pierre Mendès-France. But whether or not it survives, *L'Express* has already helped precipitate an intellectual regrouping which began before the immediate political conjuncture and will surely play a role when that conjuncture is past.

The old rhetoric is still there, in the paper, and Camus is the chief purveyor of it, sternly demanding purity and virtue on a back page, three times a week. Thus, when the nationalized Renault automobile factories award a new labor contract providing for better wages and three weeks of paid annual vacations, Camus somberly comments on the "inhumanity of the wage system" and calls for a "community of labor" to redeem man from the indignity of the pay envelope and the tyranny of the assembly line. Or he asks his reader to give thought to the oppressed Algerians and the starving workers instead of indulging in an unseemly pother about Princess Margaret's thwarted marriage. But along with all this—and François Mauriac, too!—there is something quite new, namely a concern with political economy as something other than a minor branch of literature; an awareness that the social sciences did not end with Marx, Lamenais, and Auguste Comte; and, inevitably,

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a new bottle for all this new wine—or shall we say, milk?—a fresh, simple style of presentation which seems frankly inspired by the Anglo-American popular press. Thus, for example, economic matters are handled, not by some unemployed poet, but—with a wealth of charts and graphs—by Alfred Sauvy, head of the National Statistics Institute.

It is easy to ridicule this rather odd-looking journal and, of course, "everybody" does. The conservative Right sneers at the "new Robespierres," as Senator Laffargue called them the other day. The fellow-travelers around Claude Bourdet's *Observateur* and the Catholic "progressives" of *Esprit* snipe away indefatigably with their old ideological field-pieces, especially since their dream of a popular front has been thwarted by Mendès-France's refusal to associate with the Communists. The esthetes around Jacques Laurent's *Arts* carry on an uproarious and frequently telling campaign against Françoise Giroud, who is responsible for the "back of the book": literature, theater, fashions, etc. But I have no space for these details—not this time, at least. The important thing is that a new center of political and intellectual energies has come into being. Whatever its immediate influence—and the legislative elections will provide a clue to that—I think it is needed here and will survive.

The old French idea of civilization as a radiant center sweeping the outer darkness like a lighthouse—it no longer works, not even as a metaphor. Not even here. *L'Express,* like the European Movement, is based upon a new reality-world, as it were, a shared new sense of how things are; and so, for all their political quarrels, they have more in common than they think.

J. H. Goldsmith

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Stanley Edgar Hyman

JESTING AT SCARS

Bruno Bettelheim's *Symbolic Wounds*[1] is of some significance as one of the latest attempts to revise Freudian theory drastically, in Freud's name. At a time when psychiatrists are becoming increasingly overbearing in areas of discussion they only dimly apprehend, such as literature, and seem to develop a splendid assurance in inverse proportion to the mousiness of what they bring forth, it is a pleasure to see at least one Freudian psychologist and psychiatrist making major challenges to theory, and large-scale forays into anthropology and culture, all with a tentativeness and humility akin to Freud's own. Even in the act of disagreeing with him, one must welcome the fashion in which Dr. Bettelheim, principal of the Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago, puts his views: speculatively, offering alternatives, and hedging them with such disclaimers as "This is obviously a very complex question," "This interpretation of course may be correct only in individual cases," "I am still unable to explain," and so forth.

Symbolic Wounds is shaped around seven "hypotheses" about the meaning of puberty rites among non-literate peoples. These are, in the author's words:

1. Initiation rites, including circumcision, should be viewed within the context of fertility rites, which play a primary role in primitive society.
2. Initiation rites of both boys and girls may serve to promote and symbolize full acceptance of the socially prescribed sexual role.
3. One of the purposes of male initiation rites may be to assert that men, too, can bear children.
4. Through the operation of subincision men may try to acquire sexual apparatus and functions equal to women's.
5. Circumcision may represent an effort to demonstrate sexual maturity or may be a mutilation instituted by women, or both.
6. The secrecy surrounding male initiation rites may serve to disguise the fact that the desired goal is not reached.
7. Female circumcision may be partly the result of men's ambivalence about female sex functions and partly a reaction to male circumcision.

1 The Free Press. Glencoe, Illinois. $4.75.

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The traditional Freudian explanation of initiation rites involving circumcision, subincision, scarification, the knocking-out or filing of teeth, or any ritual physical mutilation, interprets them as symbolic castration of the young by their elders, an expression of Oedipal hostility. In place of this, Dr. Bettelheim argues a basic male motivation which he calls "vagina envy," equivalent to the Freudian "penis envy" in females. It is this "vagina envy," subsuming childbirth and nursing functions, which he believes inspires symbolic wounds and male puberty rites, and he strongly suggests that Freud was unable to recognize "vagina envy" because of the androcentric nature of his psychology. Dr. Bettelheim's interest in initiation rites originated in his clinical experience with disordered children at the Orthogenic school, when four of the pubescent children, two girls and two boys, invented a secret society with a monthly ritual in which the boys were to draw blood from their index fingers or some "secret place of their bodies" and mix it with the girls' menstrual blood. "At this point," Dr. Bettelheim says unhappily, "it became necessary to interfere," but he decided that the children's fantasy resembled primitive initiation rites he had read about, and apparently he went on to read widely in modern ethnography and ethnology. It is his claim that his theory of "vagina envy" and his other hypotheses fit such clinical experience as that with the four children, and the anthropological evidence he has read, better than traditional Freudian theory does.

Insofar as this is an ambitious revision of psychoanalysis, it displays several promising features. The first is Bettelheim's realistic wariness of what he calls the "deceptively pat biological model," the idea that such laws as Haeckel's "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" (the principle that the development of the individual repeats the evolution of the group) can be more than metaphors for psychology, if indeed they are more than that for modern biology. The second is Bettelheim's real cultural relativism, his insistence that "any event may be experienced, and its meaning understood, in vastly different ways in different societies," and that the same culture trait will produce varied results not only in different social configurations but on different personalities within the culture. The third, and most remarkable in a school principal who first encountered initiatory rites in the anti-social behavior of his disordered adolescent pupils, is a recognition of the high importance of rituals, the collective emotional experiences of non-literate cultures, as neither institutionalized neurosis nor fantasy gratification (although they contain ingredients of both, surely), but as significant actions in the real world, filling vital social, psychological, and aesthetic needs that are less adequately filled in our own literate culture.

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Psychoanalysis can stand serious modification in freeing it from the biological sciences and adjusting it to developments in other cultural sciences. Unfortunately, Dr. Bettelheim does not stop there. His major disagreement with Freudian psychology is in areas of philosophic depth and profundity where it is least in need of revision and has suffered from it most. If Freud's aim was laboriously to reclaim some cropland of ego from the swamps of id, Bettelheim's policy is ignore id, let us have "ego psychology." Psychoanalysis, he says, is wrong to view "social institutions as mainly resulting from or expressive of man's destructive or irrational instinctual tendencies"; perhaps this was inevitable in those old fellows, fighting "entrenched denial and repression," but now with ego psychology we emphasize "positive human emotions and motivations."

For many of us, the answer to this was given by Freud himself in *The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement,* in response to the first of the "ego" psychologies, Alfred Adler's splintering in 1910. Freud writes in Brill's translation:

> Psychoanalysis has a greater interest in showing that all ego strivings are mixed with libidinal components. Adler's theory emphasizes the counterpart to it; namely, that all libidinal feeling contains an admixture of egotism. This would have been a palpable gain if Adler had not made use of this assertion to deny, every time, the libidinal feelings in favor of the impelling ego components. His theory thus does exactly what all patients do, and what our conscious thinking always does; it rationalizes, as Jones would say, in order to conceal the unconscious motives.

Freud's conclusion is flatly that Adler's psychology "signifies an abandonment of analysis and a secession from it," and it would appear to this writer that Bettelheim's psychology signifies just about the same thing.

In his quest for "positive human emotions and motivations," Bettelheim consistently reinterprets the evidence in the cheeriest possible fashion. Thus sadistic impulses, such as the fantasies of some of his boy patients about tearing out female genitalia, represent only envy (sadism is not mentioned in *Symbolic Wounds*). Initiation rites are not imposed on the young by the old, but gratify constructive desires in the young (masochism is not mentioned either); if they are imposed they are imposed for the youngsters' own good. "What psychoanalysis has viewed so far as originating mainly in the id, the unconscious, and as the expression of unintegrated, destructive tendencies, may be much more the result or expression of ego tendencies that try, through ritual, to integrate chaotic instinctual desires and anxieties," he writes. In-

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stead of basely submitting to the father, the initiate bravely identifies with the mother; circumcision "clearly occurs because of the people's desire for it, not because of pressure from above"; "society may thus have been founded not on the association of homicidal brothers (postulated by Freud) but on a joint effort of men to master a common problem." Finally, Bettelheim asks rhetorically: "Under which frame of reference can human behavior best be understood, that of inner freedom and human autonomy, or that of coercion by blind instinctual forces or by the insensible powers of custom and tradition?" His answer, of course, is the former, since the latter does "injury to men's inherent dignity."

Unfortunately, such authorities on "man's inherent dignity" as the great tragic writers from Aeschylus to Joyce and the great stoic philosophers from Socrates to Freud himself seem consistently to have disagreed. What this is, as terms like "integrate," "joint effort," "inner freedom and human autonomy," and so forth make clear, is the same inspirational revision of Freud that Fromm, Horney, and the neo-Freudians have been purveying over the years. Bowdlerize libido, deny id, replace the Oedipus complex with something like Bettelheim's Christine complex, and heal and be healed by *caritas*. Bettelheim, whose former title, *Love Is Not Enough,* suggests that he should know better, trots out as usual "the child treated with love and tolerance," or finds "severe oral deprivation" traumatic for the newborn child, "particularly when accompanied by cold and indifferent handling." "Important enterprises of human beings," he concludes, "and certainly those that have continued for centuries to give satisfaction, must serve positive rather than negative ends." Accentuate the positive is the slogan; love everybody or you will be left out of all the nice games. What Freud, to whose memory the book is dedicated, would have made of all this treacle can readily be imagined.

On examination, "ego psychology" looks suspiciously like old-fashioned rationalism. A pyromaniac boy who set fires at the Orthogenic School out of urethral obsession was "rehabilitated" (ah, that word from the Bowery Missions) by "being permitted to set small, safe fires under supervision and to extinguish them by throwing jets of water from a hand fire pump." When he turned the stream of water through the window of his motherly counselor's room, that speeded up the rehabilitation. Bettelheim speaks of "the rather unusual custom of eating part of the female genitalia," or remarks cheerily, "Female pubic hair is a matter of great interest to modern children." His basic metaphor for primitive initiation is teaching or learning (where it is not

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integrating or adjusting). Other metaphors are less overt: he believes that non-literate peoples consciously add new rites to their ceremonies in an attempt to gain new effects (the primitive as stage manager), and impose taboos with similarly conscious ends in mind (the primitive as legislator). Myths are invented "after the rites of the cult with the intention of explaining them," and we may compare myth "with the experiences of a young and unsophisticated child."

Bettelheim devotes a great deal of attention to Jewish religion in his book, and here his Freudianism is rather more orthodox, since he recognizes that such Jewish customs as infant circumcision obviously do not fit his voluntaristic theories. *Symbolic Wounds* suggests somewhat more familiarity with Roellenbleck on traces of Magna Mater cult in the Old Testament and Zimmerman's theory of Jewish circumcision as permanent erection (to name two of his more abstruse citations) than it does with the Bible itself. Bettelheim speaks of "the original nature of Jahwe as a fire god, who appeared to Moses in the burning thornbush," and he is orthodox Freudian in seeing fire as a phallic expression, and Judaism as thus by extension a "phallic religion." All this seems unnecessarily labored. There appear to be traces of many primitive worships in the Old Testament, among them the sacrificial blood of the lamb and bread of life later to flower in the New, but the characteristic god of the earliest "J" text is neither the priestly compilers' fire god of the altars who savors the smell of burned kidney fat (Exodus 29:13), nor the sky god of the "E" text who lives on mountain tops like Zeus and sends down storms and victories. It is a very primitive phallic deity, Buck Mulligan's "collector of prepuces," who makes male nakedness sacred (Genesis 9:23) and can show only his back parts to Moses (Exodus 33:23); who is appealed to by means of a genital oath (this has become a commonplace reading of Genesis 24:2 and 47:29) and in return confers fertility (Genesis 49:25); whose symbol of power is the rod that turns into a serpent (Exodus 4:3) and whose altar is a phallic herm on which oil is poured (Genesis 28:18) or a cairn of stones on which the sacred meal is eaten (Genesis 31:46). Judaism is an ancient religion containing such a variety of survivals that neither Bettelheim nor Freud can reduce it to any primitive monotheism, and its customs and taboos are magical, not practical, as Bettelheim recognizes when he insists that modern medical circumcision is the ancient sacrifice to the phallic deity "camouflaged as a hygienic or prophylactic manipulation." "I ignore medical rationalizations," he says grandly at one point.

The problem is, ultimately, the matter of motivation. Bettelheim

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quotes an Australian aboriginal's explanation for the *Kunapipi* ceremonies, a lengthy initiation rite involving circumcision and subincision, and adds "I cannot accept the obvious rationalization." When a Nandi in Africa explains tribal cliteridectomy with "We are Nandi. We don't want such a hanging down thing in our women," Bettelheim comments "I believe that the custom originates in more positive desires." Rationalization is, of course, the name one vocabulary of motivations reserves for another. When an Australian informant justifies subincision of the young men with "It makes the old men strong," he is saying that it contributes to the psychic well-being of the tribe, which is precisely what Bettelheim is saying in another phrasing. Any monist interpretive system insists, "This is why they think they do it, but I will tell you why they *really* do it." In actual fact there are no motivations in the situation (except the neutral one that it is believed to be a good thing to do), they are put in by the interpreter, and you come out with whatever explanation your vocabulary smuggled in. Aristotle's fourth or Efficient Cause, God's inscrutable purpose, is here simply being argued against his third or Final Cause, man's motive, with various secular equivalents for the deity.

Bettelheim's conclusion, that initiation rites are "efforts at acquiring the functions of the other sex," begs this question: are they efforts in the minds of the initiates, the initiators, the tribe, the field worker, Bettelheim, Freud, History, or God? We would be better off, I think, accepting the fact that causation is relative to the vocabulary used and ultimately unknowable. Bettelheim recognizes that rites can "now satisfy needs different from those they served in the past"; he accepts Benedict's statement that rites continue stable while their associated symbolic meanings (myths) vary, and he admits "interpreting rituals on the basis of their possible symbolic meaning is hazardous." He has, however, a characteristically psychoanalytic distrust of Malinowskian social function, arguing that what Malinowski sees as means may in fact be the tribe's end and vice versa, and that functional explanations do not explain the individual's own wish. Of course they do not, which is why we need psychoanalytic explanations too, and both, along with other motivational systems, for a rich and meaningful interpretation. Our job is to learn how to translate from one vocabulary into another, to build bridges between systems, and insofar as Bettelheim limits his pluralism within one system and denies the validity of others, we must build his bridges for him.

Despite all these failings, *Symbolic Wounds* is a useful book. It points

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up the real need to revise Freud, not in the neo-Freudian direction of bowdlerizing or re-repressing his profound insights, but in putting them undiminished into a context of our later knowledge. Thus, as Kenneth Burke suggests in the section "The Temporizing of Essence" in *A Grammar of Motives,* we must translate what Freud called his "vision" of the Primal Horde from its characteristic nineteenth-century form as a theory of prehistoric "origin" back into its true form as a statement about the nature or "essence" of the Oedipal situation, generally recognizing all such statements of temporal priority as actually statements about logical priority. We must additionally replace the inherited "memory traces" (with which Freud anticipated Jung's racial unconscious) by cultural transmission, and adapt in general to new discoveries in sociology, anthropology, and mythology, which would include throwing out not only Freud's Moses the Egyptian (as Bettelheim does) but Moses the historical figure (as Bettelheim does not).

Symbolic Wounds points up equally the need for a serious reconsideration of the role and relationship of the sexes, transcending both Freud's androcentric view and the gynocentrism of Bettelheim's authorities—Mead, Bateson, Ashley-Montague—the new Cybele cult seemingly convinced that all the boys want to be girls and would achieve it by surgery were it not for the mayhem laws. Here we would start from the post-Malinowskian recognition of a universal Oedipus complex shaped differently in different cultures, and seek to balance in our own society the importance of the female-dominated childhood and the male-dominated adult world. Finally, *Symbolic Wounds* suggests the enormous importance of ritual. "Rudimentary forms of religious beliefs and rituals were probably the first inventions of the human mind," Bettelheim says, aware of ritual origins; "envy must be hidden and expressed only through ritual," he adds, alive to function. In the last paragraph of his book Bettelheim calls for "more civilized, less magic and more satisfying institutions" as our equivalents for primitive rites. These are, for some of us, the imaginative organizations of art, ritual structures more significant than factors of ritual origin and function, and they bring us whatever of psychic well-being our poor bedeviled tribe has.

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BOOKS

FICTION CHRONICLE

THE ACCEPTANCE WORLD. By Anthony Powell. William Heinemann Ltd., London. 12s 6d.
A PERFECT WOMAN. By L. P. Hartley. Hamish Hamilton, London. 12s 6d.
THE WALKER. By Patrick O'Brian. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50.
HERITAGE. By Anthony West. Random House. $3.75.
THE INHERITORS. By William Golding. Faber and Faber Ltd., London. 12s 6d.
THAT UNCERTAIN FEELING. By Kingsley Amis. Victor Gollancz Ltd., London. 12s 6d.
A CHARMED LIFE. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt, Brace. $3.95.
THE DEER PARK. By Norman Mailer. G. P. Putnam. $4.00.

Of the eight works of fiction listed above, all published last season, four were published in America and four in England, though of the books published in America, one (*Heritage*) is by an Englishman and one (*The Walker*) is by an Anglo-Irishman who now lives in France. Possibly the selection is at fault here; perhaps one season's publication is not enough to judge by. All the same, this distribution of authorship is disturbing to our conviction that the energy of Anglo-Saxon fiction has been passing to America.

Let us consider the best first. This plainly means Mr. Powell. Mr. Powell's book is the third in a still unfinished series, *The Music of Time*; the first two were *A Buyer's Market* and *A Question of Upbringing*. Though the remark may well be offensive to both, I think Mr. Powell ought to be considered in conjunction with C. P. Snow, not simply because each has undertaken a *comédie humaine,* but also because each has a firm grip on the actuality of the world, despite his imaginative penetration of it. Mr. Powell can take us about the London of his time and show us its people and places; they exist. That may seem a simple accomplishment, but it is certainly one well beneath the notice of most of these writers. Moreover, Mr. Powell's vision of people and places is all of a piece, so that his novel, for all its complexity, leaves us with a single feeling about the world, a wry, self-possessed, sympathetic melancholy. This feeling colors everything from "the passages [of a hotel,

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which] seemed catacombs of a hell assigned to the subdued regret of those who had lacked in life the income to which they felt themselves entitled," to "a sea of countenances stamped like the skin of Renoir's women with that curiously pink, silky surface that seems to come from prolonged sitting about in Ritz hotels." It colors equally the varied characters of the novel, from familiar ones of the series like Sillery and Uncle Giles, Widmerpool and Stringham, to the figures developed for this novel to represent the rise of Marxist ideas in the period, of whom perhaps the most fascinating is the German Marxist dramatist Guggenbuhl. He seems impressive in an awful way when he lectures a party on the drama. "Moscow Art Theatre is just to tolerate," he says, "but what of biomechanics, of *Trümmer-Kunst,* has it? . . . The modern ethico-social play I think you do not like . . . it is workers untouched by middle class that will make spontaneous." But when he stops, a girl remarks, "I can't think why we don't have a revolution here and start something of that sort," and then he seems only sad.

Mr. Powell's world looks very like what Nicholas sees from the car window the night he and Jean become lovers:

> On either side of the highway, grotesque buildings, which in daytime resembled the temples of some shoddy, utterly unsympathetic Atlantis, now assumed the appearance of an Arctic city's frontier forts. Veiled in snow, these hideous monuments of a lost world bordered a broad river of black, foaming slush, across the surface of which the car skimmed and jolted with a harsh crackling sound, as if the liquid beneath were scalding hot.

This is the acceptance world, where Mr. Powell, like one of his characters, gazes "thoughtfully round the room, as if contemplating the deterioration of a landscape, known from youth, once famed for its natural beauty, now ruined beyond recall."

Mr. Hartley's novel is not so good a one as Mr. Powell's and inferior to his own previous novel, *The Go-Between.* Nonetheless it is a novel, fully realized and almost too well contrived. It is the story of a middle class couple, the Eastwoods. They become acquainted with a novelist who gets interested in an Austrian girl employed by the local pub. Both the novelist and the Austrian girl have lovers in the background. As a consequence of one of Mr. Hartley's almost mathematically exact plots, Harold Eastwood becomes entangled with the Austrian barmaid and Isabel Eastwood with the novelist; the novelist's long-time mistress gets hold of the Austrian barmaid's young man and tells him what she mistakenly deduces from the novelist's latest work, that the

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barmaid is the novelist's mistress, and the young man murders both the girl and the novelist. The Eastwoods then settle back into marriage.

It is perhaps unfair to Mr. Hartley to summarize the main lines of his plot this way, for the strength of his novel lies in the amount of just observation he can bring under the control of its meticulously planned structure. But in the end there is something dead about *A Perfect Woman*. The conception of the central characters, the Eastwoods, is too simple for a novel so nobly planned. The robot-like simplicity of Harold Eastwood's feelings is a convention. The same thing is true, in a smaller degree, of Isabel. These are characters devised to be the butt of satire; in a realistic novel they are unbelievable. Mr. Hartley has attempted in *A Perfect Woman* something like what Mr. Marquand attempted in *Sincerely, Willis Wayde* and has failed for very much the same reason.

The last book among these eight which deserves to be taken quite seriously is Mr. O'Brian's. Mr. O'Brian is a virtuoso of language and of narrative deployment, what one would expect Mr. Frank O'Connor to be like if he could add to his sense of comedy and pathos a sense of terror, for like Mr. O'Connor, Mr. O'Brian can use fantasy as an integral part of reality, as he does in "The Drawing of the Curranwood Badgers," where a minutely detailed account of the digging out of the badgers grows more and more ominous, until the two hunters find themselves looking down with horror at something very strange: "Aloysius' other hand came up to cross him, came blindly. . . . A harsh noise in his throat there was, . . . and Gethin's tongue ran of itself and said, 'But a badger has no hands . . .?'" It is this power which makes Mr. O'Brian so skilful with abnormal states of consciousness. Sometimes the abnormality is a simple one, as when a girl with a terror of heights cannot resist pushing her jolly, unterrified husband as he leans over the cliff he has dragged her back to so many times; "Samphire," the story is called. Sometimes it is the advanced but reasoned abnormality of "The Clockmender," the man whose weakness for exactitude has led him to identify his whole consciousness with his collection of clocks. Stories of this kind are the finest and the most frequent in Mr. O'Brian's book; they constitute about half of it. But there are also fine stories of a more conventional kind, like "A Minor Operation" (during which the patient dies); and there is one brilliantly comic story, "The Virtuous Peleg," about a simple Irish saint's battle with a whole army of devils who, like the police in a Keystone-cops comedy, always get the worst of it. If Mr. O'Brian seems occasionally to have worked up a story in

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order to show how good he is with the eerie, this impression is more than compensated for by the preternatural solidity of the detail in the stories of hunting and fishing and climbing.

This brings us to the more or less interesting failures. Mr. Anthony West's third novel, *Heritage,* appears to be a very slightly disguised fictional account of his own parents, and it takes on a special if adventitious interest as a description of them. If one can judge from *Experiment in Autobiography* and from Mr. Vincent Brome's *H. G. Wells* (though Mr. Brome was, I understand, badly cramped by legal threats from various quarters), the portrait of H. G. Wells here is remarkably exact, especially in its reproduction of Wells' talk; about the rest of the portraits it is impossible for an outsider even to guess, urgently as he is invited to by the dust-jacket's "The story of a son torn between two high-powered, world-famous and unmarried parents." As a novel in its own right, Mr. West's book is a workmanlike job, which never succeeds in convincing the reader of the reality of the narrator's problems, though the gradual disillusionment of the narrator and his consequent achievement of freedom from these "high-powered" parents is the ostensible point.

Mr. Golding, the only one of these writers who has not, I believe, been published in America, has not lived up to the promise of his remarkable first novel, *Lord of the Flies,* in this second novel, *The Inheritors. Lord of the Flies* describes a group of boys who have been marooned on a tropical island by a plane wreck during a war. The boys are magnificently real, and yet the reader is made gradually to feel that he is watching, not simply a group of boys in an unusual situation, but the slow, embattled descent of humanity from a civilized, even parliamentary society into a barbaric and murderous one. The novel creates a terrifying sense of the tenuousness of civilized life. Nothing like this, alas, is going on in *The Inheritors.* Here we watch the gradual wiping out of a family group of Neanderthal men by a group of primitive men. Mr. Golding's ability to imagine his way into savage states of mind makes *The Inheritors* interesting, but this interest is generated for a subject that has at best a remote historical point and, at worst, the high-grade science fiction appeal of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids.*

In a different way, Mr. Kingsley Amis' second book is disappointing. His wonderful comic sense is still evident in *That Uncertain Feeling.* It is at its best when it is working on the most ordinary dilemmas: "There seemed to be four knobs under the dials and I pulled the right-hand one. 'The end of civilization as we know it,' a voice said. 'Good-night.'

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I returned this farewell and pushed the knob back." In his first novel, *Lucky Jim,* Mr. Amis provided a merely nominal love story as a framework for such comic effects (there was, to be sure, an apparently serious study of a neurotic woman, but it seemed like a mere mistake in that novel). Here, however, Mr. Amis has tried a more serious story. Sometimes, disciplined to this story, the comic sense achieves an almost Graham Greene effect ("As soon as I was outside the door the wind, an old enemy of mine (like vanity), sprang at me. . . ."). But most of the time it is running wild on its own, producing set pieces of comedy or quite marvelous parodies (like the one of Dylan Thomas which begins: "When in time's double morning, meaning death,/ Denial's four-eyed bird, that Petrine cock,/ Crew junction down the sleepers of the breath,/ Iron bled that dry tree at the place of rock, . . ."). Funny as these things are in themselves, they are irrelevant in the serious novel Mr. Amis is writing about his hero; or else the serious novel is irrelevant in this comedy. But I think the first statement is really right, for there is every evidence that Mr. Amis wants to write the serious novel, and he is so gifted a writer that it is hard not to hope he will learn, as Auden's Prospero did, how to suffer without saying something clever about suffering.

Both the remaining novels do not seem to me to come off though carefully planned, skillfully made and remarkably thoughtful. Much the more interesting is certainly Miss McCarthy's *A Charmed Life.* Miss McCarthy is one of our most brilliant essayists, and she has, in the past, made something quite wonderful, if possibly not quite fiction, out of essays on her own childhood (in *Cast a Cold Eye*). In *A Charmed Life* she has committed herself to a full display of her talents as a Jamesian novelist. She puts before us a series of matched couples—some of whom look vaguely familiar—from the artist colony of New Leeds; among them the major tension is created by the meeting of Martha Sinnott and her ex-husband Miles Murphy. After an evening in which Martha and Miles alternate in lecturing us in full-dress classroom style on the drama, Miles seduces Martha in a scene so grimly physiological that it might have been written by the good Dr. Kinsey himself. Martha is then killed in an automobile accident.

The narrative of *A Charmed Life* is projected through a series of carefully arranged central intelligences, and given the character of Miss McCarthy's talent, this appears to have been a mistake. The Jamesian form forces her to minimize her gift for brilliant comment on life and to try, instead, a direct presentation of life in alternating scenes and meditations by the characters: something which, for all her intelligence—

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or perhaps, in another sense of the word, because of it—nearly always turns out in her work to be synthetic. The playreading scene is a good illustration. The play is *Bérénice,* and there are fine opportunities for irony in an occasion where an evening of comment on the heroic renunciation of *Bérénice* leads up to Martha's and Miles' sexual encounter. Miss McCarthy saw these opportunities: the scheme for the action is hers. But though the necessary ideas are there, they never take on the dramatic life of characters moving from felt attitude to felt attitude; instead, they are elaborated through the mouths of the characters as they might be in an essay. "In the Greeks you get bitterness and you get it again in Shakespeare. There's acceptance without resignation—a kind of defiance in the end, like Othello's last speech: 'I have done the state, etc.'" This goes on for pages. Much the same thing is true of the meditations, the meandering lifelessness of which is emphasized by the frequent flashes of Miss McCarthy's penetrating wit when she allows herself to slip into comment: ". . . pity was very unreliable, as a guide to conduct. It signified a conquered repugnance." In moments like this, as in much of its plan, *A Charmed Life* has all the deadly charm of Miss McCarthy's glittering intelligence, but it hardly ever comes to that life which is essential to a novel of this kind.

Mr. Mailer's *The Deer Park* is also clearly the work of a talented writer. It brings a young pilot back from Korea to do a stretch at Desert D'Or, a place not unlike Palm Springs. It starts out like a fine novel of manners with a sharp-eyed, sardonic account of Desert D'Or and its Hollywood characters. Perhaps Mr. Mailer's studio head, Herman Teppis, seems too obviously caricatured (but what can you do to make plausible in fiction characters who are so fantastic in fact), but people like Collie Munshin, Mr. Teppis' son-in-law and second in command, are completely realized people. Mr. Mailer adds to this comedy of manners a good deal of less serious journalism such as a McCarthyite attack on his director, Eitel, in which Eitel answers the Senator with a courage and brilliance which, if implausible, is a thoroughly satisfying realization of the day dream all of us have had.

Gradually, however, it becomes clear that Mr. Mailer is writing, side by side with his comedy of manners, another book completely incongruous with it in tone and third-rate in conception. This book aims at profound tragedy and achieves a gruesome sentimentality of the kind usually associated with the Gothic novel. The narrator turns out to be an orphan, psychologically lost, who found community with his fellow pilots in Korea until it came over him that they were burning orphans; as the night the day, it followed that he became temporarily impotent.

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The counterpart to Eitel, whose career gives us the word on politics, is a Gothic satanist named Marion Faye. This Faye is a great reader of books, earns his living as a pimp, and exercises what we are to believe is his unsleeping, tragic religious sense by devising a sadistic sex life for himself and trying to persuade a girl to commit suicide. He is also, of course, given to a good deal of praying, in the vein of "Oh, God, have mercy on Father Marion for he is a saint in Hell," which ends by making a writer like Grahame Greene sound positively responsible.

All this Gothic extravagance appears to be meant quite seriously, as does its central proposition, that happiness and the capacity for emotion—love, affection, charity—are roughly proportional to the talent for sexual gymnastics. Well-being for Mr. Mailer's characters is a life of balls; tragedy the monkey mopes which fall between. The Deer Park was the place where the victims of Louis XV's lust were prepared for his delectation. Perhaps Mr. Mailer means us to think of his Deer Park as we think of Louis', but it is hard to believe for he treats several of his characters as if he thought them fully human.

Perhaps the most disturbing tendency in these novels is the way any amount of cleverness and intelligence combine in them to frustrate life. All these writers are talented, yet they repeatedly fail to realize their talent as fiction. With the exceptions of Mr. Powell and Mr. Hartley, and in his strange way Mr. O'Brian, they are deeply infected, the English with a blighting cleverness and the American with some one or another abstract theory, so that they are botanizing, if not on their mothers' graves, then on their imagined children's.

Arthur Mizener

ORWELL AS A MODERATE HERO

GEORGE ORWELL. By John Atkins. Ungar. $4.50.

It is only a few years since Orwell's death, but the amount of criticism directed toward his work is already enormous. Each month new articles appear; in England three critical biographies have been published, and more are on the way. All of which is as it should be, since Orwell is one of the few contemporary writers who really matter, one of the few who have brought about a significant change in our intellectual climate. Yet even as his reputation keeps growing and the appreciations keep pouring out, one notices a curious shift of critical

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feeling, dimly so in America but clearly enough in England. The very writers who celebrate his work and his career find it necessary to do so in terms that prepare—it isn't a conspiracy, only an impulse—for his future devaluation. There is something gritty and irascible in Orwell, perhaps even ill-tempered, which the liberal critic finds unnerving; for Orwell cannot easily be assimilated to the current notion of what a well-equipped literary man should be. And if the liberal critic happens to be ashamed of this response, or too cautious to declare it publicly, it breaks past his guard to produce a confused, though sometimes amusing, ambivalence of feeling.

By far the fullest and most ambitious study of Orwell yet to appear is the work of an English critic, John Atkins. Were amiability enough for writing intellectual biography or literary criticism, Mr. Atkins would be among the masters. He has worked his way through a great deal of Orwell's journalism and quotes from it with a pleasing generosity; he has included a thin but reliable sketch of Orwell's life; he has summarized the contents of his books and gravely fractured them under subject headings. Many useful things are said by Mr. Atkins, and a few splendid ones. He writes with an affection for his subject, a good-natured modesty of spirit, which deserves commendation almost as much as it is unlikely to arouse enthusiasm.

It therefore takes a certain *meanness* to add that Mr. Atkins has written a tepid book, which in its lack of animation and its wintry devotion to "common sense" tells us a great deal more about the historical moment than about Orwell. The very method Mr. Atkins has chosen—he arranges Orwell's thought under topical headings, "The Meaning of Poverty," "The Class System," "Political Commentary," "Saints and Sinners"—is itself indicative of a deeply academic outlook, for it means that problems become transformed into subjects. One sometimes feels that Mr. Atkins is the kind of critic who would write a study of Moses by working up ten chapters, one for each Commandment.

Not that it is easy to get at a writer like Orwell, whose best work was often done in fugitive journalism and under the stimulus of political dispute. Obviously, the usual method of plowing through a writer's books in chronological order—that sand-bar on which so many "definitive" studies have sunk—would be disastrous if applied to Orwell, since not many of his books need or can sustain extended analysis. But there is, I think, a way out of this difficulty, and that is to conceive of Orwell's literary career in terms of political and cultural situations to which he was forced to respond. The idea of pressure is central to Orwell's way

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of living and writing, and only a critic who understands this can achieve a fruitful relation to him. This would mean to trace his career not in conventional biographical terms, but as a series of moral and intellectual crises, the painful confrontations of a man who was driven to plunge into every vortex of misery or injustice that he saw, yet had an obvious distaste for the trumpery of modern politics.

For such an approach, however, the critic would have to be less moderate in mind and temper than Mr. Atkins; his imagination would have to be a bit more fiery and perhaps a little less liberal. He would have to take very seriously, even if only during the act of composition, the ideas and problems that Orwell himself took seriously; and he could not keep hinting, as Mr. Atkins all too often does, though probably without quite realizing it himself, that when all is said and done Orwell was the product of a fanatic age upon which we can now afford to look back and look down. Mr. Atkins is too cozy with the spirit of the times, too much a decent Englishman who seems, half the time, to be wondering how George—who did, after all, go to Eton—got himself mixed up with the messy fanaticisms of Europe.

The Orwell who emerges from Mr. Atkins' pages is a mildly intelligent, mildly gifted and quite unimportant writer, notable, most of all, for a gray quality called "decency." Decency, explains Mr. Atkins, "is based on respect for the other person, and respect derives from love—not sexual passion, of course, but the quieter passion, or conviction that all men are brothers and that unless we keep this in mind we will slip into a belief that all men are enemies, with the inevitable results." One would not like to seem opposed to so wholesome a quality as decency, but it needs to be said that the Orwell who is being created here—the decent man, the good man—was not the one, he could not have been the one, who wrote *1984*. Mr. Atkins' description, which is typical of both his thought and his style, transforms Orwell into a down-at-the-heels Boy Scout who voted Labor. In its limpness of thought and phrasing, it is exactly the sort of lukewarm praise that is calculated to make Orwell unread in the next ten years. (The limp phrase often seems to have become the last defense of British culture.)

Still, there are good things in the book. Mr. Atkins appreciates Orwell's "personal conviction that failure was the only virtue." (Hardly a belief, however, that is characteristic of the merely "decent" man!) And he can write, with unusual vigor, that Orwell "embraced poverty as other writers have embraced a woman and with the same result: his spirit was fired and he was no longer in any doubt about what his true

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work was to be." Unfortunately, poverty too has a way of becoming one of Mr. Atkins' topics, rather than a passionate motif in Orwell's career that set him apart from almost every other writer of his time.

Worse still, Mr. Atkins accepts the annoying assumption of so much modern criticism that a writer must be "explained" in terms other than those he employs. Orwell, writes Mr. Atkins, "had only to think of something apparently beyond endurance and he could not rest until he had endured." Both true and well said; but one would suppose that for certain kinds of men no more need be said, their sense of identification with the weak and the humiliated being an experience sufficiently authentic to require no psychological "translation." Mr. Atkins, however, cannot refrain from a half-hearted effort to relate Orwell's passionate interest in poverty to such notions as "mortification" and "masochism." Not many people can embrace the style of life toward which Orwell strained, but we should at least have sufficient imagination to honor those who do.

Nor does this have anything to do with "sainthood." All the talk in England about Orwell having been, as V. S. Pritchett put it, "the conscience of his generation," or, as Mr. Atkins writes, "a social saint," seems to me beside the point. The more one learns about Orwell, the more one begins to doubt that he was unusually virtuous or good; but it is only the old maids of criticism, hunting for stray bits of morality as if they were pieces of tatting left in the parlor, who are likely to worry about that. Neither the selflessness nor the patience of the saint, certainly not the indifference to temporal passion that would seem a goal of sainthood, can be found in Orwell. He himself wrote: "No doubt alcohol, tobacco and so forth are things a saint must avoid, but sainthood is a thing that human beings must avoid."

As a "saint" Orwell would not trouble us, for by now we have learned how to put up with saints: we canonize them and thus are rid of them. In fact, one sometimes suspects that behind the persistent liberal effort to raise Orwell from the mire of polemic to the clear heavens of sainthood there is an unconscious desire to render him harmless. It is as a man and a writer that Orwell makes his challenge to the writers who follow him. He stirs us by his example, by his all too human and truculent example. For he stood in basic opposition to the modes and assumptions that have since come to dominate American and English literary life. He was a writer who rejected the middle class pattern—early in life he had looked into it and found it dead—and could never bring himself to abide by the rituals of Good Form; he knew how empty, and often how filled with immoderate aggression, the praise of modera-

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tion could be; instinctively, he turned away from the cant and pretentiousness of the "literary." He wasn't a Marxist or even a political revolutionary. He was something better and more dangerous: a revolutionary personality. He turned his back on his own caste; he tried to discover what was happening beyond the provincial limits of high-brow life.[1] If he was a good man, it was mainly in the sense that he had measured his desperation and come to accept it as a mode of honor. And he possessed the impulse most essential to the good writer: he was ready to take chances.

No one is obliged to admire this kind of writer, and there are clearly grounds for a variety of criticisms and qualifications. All that is necessary is that a critic be able to recognize such a writer when he meets up with him—in short, that Mr. Atkins be able to distinguish between someone like Orwell and someone like himself.

What finally betrays Mr. Atkins' hand is his treatment of *1984*, a book toward which he adopts a moderately condescending tone. Quite failing to grasp its subterranean passion and prophetic power, he writes that *1984* "is one of those books that overpower you as you read but which do not leave any strong conviction in the mind. . . ." And a little later, "My advice to old ladies is not to be too frightened by this book. . . ."

Why? Because "under modern conditions it is inconceivable that any government could control, even with the most advanced technical resources available, a population so completely as is done in *1984*." Suppose, however, that *1984* is taken, as Orwell clearly meant it, not as a portrait of a totalitarian society but as an extreme version of the *idea* of totalitarianism; suppose "any government" could control a population only two-thirds as much as Orwell says; suppose, for that matter, it could do no more than Hitler and Stalin already have. Isn't that enough to frighten old ladies, to say nothing of young men? And what *would* frighten Mr. Atkins?

Irving Howe

1 A mistake, in the opinion of the English novelist Angus Wilson. Writing in *The Observer* some time ago, Mr. Wilson discovered that "the truth is that by leaving Eton not for Oxford or Cambridge but for 'experience in the world,' Orwell lost more than he gained. He lost touch with those in all classes whose lives were in fixed patterns. . . ." Even if this slightly comic remark were true, one would suppose that for a book like *The Road to Wigan Pier*, it would be worth losing whatever Orwell might have found to say about those whose lives remain in fixed patterns; after all, there really isn't much point in regretting that he wasn't Jane Austen. Any writer worth reading at all has limitations that are inseparable from, and usually go to make up, his strengths.

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THE DEEDS AND DREAMS OF YEATS

THE LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS. Edited by Allan Wade. Macmillan. $9.50.

For a man who lived a long time and was very active and ambitious, Yeats was unusually fortunate in his friends. Those in whom he was not so fortunate, who became his enemies, he mostly managed to outlive. "I did hate leaving the last word to George Moore," he wrote in a letter of 1927. And now after his own death he continues to be lucky in the same way. The editor of this monumental collection of Yeats's letters was a member of the poet's London circle, an actor and a director of plays. He is also something that few such survivors of old times and intimates of great men ever are, a scholar. With patient labor he has assembled letters enough to fill some nine hundred pages. He has transcribed Yeats's wretched handwriting when that has been necessary, has figured out approximate dates where dates are missing, has written a commentary summarizing the events of Yeats's life from period to period, and—best of all—has identified the many obscure or semi-obscure persons addressed or alluded to in the letters. Who was Althea Gyles, of whom Yeats reports that "she brought a prosperous love-affair to an end by reading Browning to the poor man in the middle of the night"? Mr. Wade will tell you, and with just the right amount of detail.

To be sure, the volume is not so complete as its title and its huge bulk make you think it is. For one reason or another, Yeats's correspondence with several people of capital importance in his life—his wife, Maud Gonne, John Synge, Ezra Pound, Gordon Craig—had to be left out of the collection or be feebly represented in it. It is still a collection of great fascination and importance. Although some of the best things Yeats said in his letters have been used in the books about him published by Joseph Hone, Richard Ellmann and others having access to his papers, those things often sound better in context. And of course it is context of the general as well as the specific kind which this volume supplies so richly. More than half a century of the poet's life is here in his own words, and with it much of the life of poetry itself from William Morris to W. H. Auden. If the ways of praising Yeats have grown dull with use and so have almost ceased to seem actively true, this book should help to renew them.

In themselves, however, his letters are not specially exhilarating. A few of them are that, in particular the later ones; and he is livelier with some of his correspondents than with others. Despite the fine re-

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marks they contain, the long series addressed to Katherine Tynan fails to reveal any adequate human reason for its existence. He seems to have thought she had the makings of good Irish poet, but this was not enough; the letters become tedious with the effort to keep it up and not be patronizing. Even the letters to his father show the strain, and his father once complained that his son lacked "love" and made him feel like "a black beetle." With Olivia Shakespear, on the other hand, he is consistently engaging; she seems to have had no part in any of his projects but was simply a charming woman who appealed to him. For the most part, then, he had not the gift of writing letters as if he were a man living among men and women. If he has more of this feeling than, say, Wordsworth shows in his letters, he has less than, say, Byron or Keats show in theirs. Yeats's correspondents are mainly artists of some kind and are addressed by him as such. They are frankly his associates in what sometimes looks like a widespread conspiracy to be great, rather than simply to be. But he was ambitious for them as well as himself; and it is to the advantage of his letters, not to mention his poetry, that his ambitiousness was that of the tortoise. He was a slow, patient, moral conspirator, seeking a triumph of merit. He may have said to his sister, when she told him Swinburne was dead, "I know, and now I am king of the cats," but he was no usurper. He aimed at what might be called legitimate succession, by way of a profound absorption in English poetry and a profound transformation of it. The size of his ambition, together with the conscientiousness of his methods, makes his letters extremely weighty and interesting in the mass. He was a meticulous correspondent, giving in abundance what he could give: ideas, plans, criticism, anecdotes. He had a zest for problems and situations, which his letters communicate to us. His ever-present tact did not prevent him from being quite firm, as in a long masterly letter to Sean O'Casey rejecting *The Silver Tassie*. Conscious as he shows himself to be of the Irish temper—of George Moore's "incredible violence" and the "sour and argumentative" way of Irishmen in England—he clearly cultivated amenity in his relations with people. "It's a poet's business to be amiable," he tells his publisher, A. H. Bullen. But this is not the same thing as being merely respectable: Yeats would not have relished the literary atmosphere of the 1950's.

He was fortunate and he knew it and the knowledge colors all his letters. He seems alternately a true example of the happy warrior in literature and a case of clinical euphoria. He is constantly recounting his successes—with the poems or plays he is writing, the reviewers who review his books, the audiences who attend his plays or lectures, the

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famous people he meets at parties. And his satisfaction in the material arrangements of his life makes him purr like a cat. He rejoices in the comforts introduced into his lodgings by Lady Gregory: the port wine and the blankets. He rejoices in his periods of residence at Coole Park, her country house; the "great rooms" (in the plural) are splendidly silent and there are no fewer than seven woodlands, all magnificent. In all this there is something of the eternal spirit of the bachelor: he must make his nest all the cozier, and chirp louder over it, because it is a nest for one. The spirit persists after Yeats's belated marriage, when he begins to celebrate his wife's feats of housekeeping and decorating, and the attractions of the houses which he himself is now in a position to acquire. But it must be noted that he did not long remain in the old tower which he called "my castle," or the house in Dublin which he describes as a "mansion." He never really settled down; and of the money that came to him in prizes and from lecturing in America, he gave much to other poets and to his various causes. In his letters he has an odd way of keeping the phenomena of his suffering in the background. From an allusion here and there, we may guess at the "ignominy of boyhood" as he knew it, the hand-to-mouth existence he led in youth with his loving improvident father, his detestation of London in those days, the hardship of his life in ill-heated and candle-lighted rooms, the pain caused by his bad eyesight and frequent failures of health, the unhappy consequences of his long vain wooing of Maud Gonne, the labor of supporting himself by his writing and lecturing, the sheer fatigue of being a poet in the twentieth century. But such experiences merely give a tragic accent to the strange high comedy of his career. Even when, in the late 'twenties, he breaks down and becomes very ill, he has a way of exulting in the misfortune. "Yesterday the doctor gave me a shock. I said, 'Why am I so exhausted?' He replied, 'The overwork of years.' "

Complacency or courage? A little of the first, a great deal more of the last. He writes as one who has earned his good fortune, made himself lucky. "They went forth to battle but they always fell"—Matthew Arnold's motto for the Irish spirit must have rung in his ears, as it did in Joyce's, not as a knell but as a challenge. The waste of Irish genius in indolence and backbiting, the waste of his father's genius in particular, seem to have determined him to husband his own. He developed a system of thought, a method of style, an entire economy of literary action. Primarily his thought reached inward, to the power resident in the self. "Even things seemingly beyond control answer strangely to what is within," he told Florence Farr. This was applied spiritualism, table-tapping become a way of life, magic raised to the proportions of an

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ethic. Among the scrappy dreamers and "penitent frivolous" whom he describes as haunting Madame Blavatsky and the Golden Dawn group, he alone was to achieve, in his way, the transmutation of metals and the elixir of life.

But to his faith in the single soul was added an appreciation of the part of outward action. He had a conception of the poet's role in the world. What this was he suggests to John Quinn: "Keats's lines telling how Homer left great verses to a little clan seem(ed) to my imagination when I was a boy a description of the happiest fate that could come to a poet." This appears always to have remained his idea of the happy fate, and no doubt it was one which he shared with Keats, Goethe, Whitman and others who have sought ideal audiences within the heterogeneous populations of modern nations. For Yeats the conviction that he had a little clan was some time in materializing. He might help to organize the Rhymers Club in the 'nineties but that was not it; and the absence in him of any strong sense of an audience helps to account for the tremulous vagueness of his early verse. In proportion as he developed that sense, felt around him the "hearers and hearteners" of his work, he developed the *viva voce* quality, the manipulation of tone, the effect of address or stance, which animate his mature work. But just as he had to learn to write the "great verses," so he had to recruit the little clan to go with them. Actually there were many clans, ranging from his fellow occultists of the Golden Dawn to the audiences of the Abbey Theatre; and when he had despaired of tangible audiences he sought their Platonic counterpart in some ideal Byzantium of the past or simply among the self-delighting people of whatever time or place. He carried his dream into his cosmopolitan old age, determined to the last that he should know his audience, should feel it to be made up of men and women like himself. "It is time that I wrote my will: I choose upstanding men," he wrote in the great concluding passage of "The Tower." It is hard to think of another modern poet who would venture to cast his supreme thought in this testamentary form, or who, having ventured it, could carry it off with Yeats's poise.

His was a poise born of conviction and based on effort. If anyone is left in the world who supposes that Yeats practiced in his life only the "wasteful virtues" he praised in his poetry, these letters will undeceive him. They show how firmly he occupied that twilight realm between dreaming and doing which he celebrated in all his poetry—the realm where anything is possible.

F. W. Dupee

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FREEDOM FOR WHAT?

LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Criterion Books. $4.00.

Sartre has become a symbol. He stands for something which, in the public mind, is loosely called "existentialism" and of which a few basic concepts, such as freedom, choice, anxiety, ambiguity, and action, are now public property and commonplace tools for a sophisticated analysis of the "human situation" in our age. Having contributed his share to the *Zeitgeist,* Sartre has had his day. Other varieties of existentialism—usually with a religious message—have pushed him off the stage. His chief contribution to philosophy, a major work called *Being and Nothing,* remains unknown and untranslated; nor has it been followed, on his part, by any serious philosophical effort. His long-promised and long-awaited book on ethics has not appeared. This is a pity; for the present volume shows again, I think, that Sartre's chief strength lies in the original, acute, and easy handling of philosophical ideas. Perhaps he is himself satisfied with the myth he has created: the actively engaged and deeply committed intellectual who proudly proclaims the absolute sovereignty of his Promethean freedom from all commitments. It is a significant symbol; for the mounting pressures of external and internal mechanisms of defense and restriction have mobilized everywhere a deep-seated longing for personal autonomy and free expression; but it is a myth, nonetheless.

The present volume contains a collection of essays written before and during World War II. Thus it affords some interesting insights into the genesis of Sartre's ideas which have produced the myth. One source is Descartes. In an essay, called "Cartesian Freedom," Sartre pays his tribute to the father of modern French philosophy. Descartes's simple and ingenious formula, *cogito ergo sum,* conceived as the immediate datum and ultimate truth of consciousness, is retained as the cornerstone of Sartre's own metaphysics. For the method of doubt by which Descartes reached his conclusion is, for Sartre, still an indispensable proof for the "negative aspect" of human freedom. In the act of radical doubt and independent thought, man manifests his freedom from "nature," both external and internal. This serves as point of departure for Sartre's own postulate that the "negative freedom" must be enlarged to, or complemented by, a "positive, productive freedom"; *i.e.,* a freedom *for* autonomous action, of which Descartes deprived man in order

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to allocate it to God or the Catholic Church. Sartre has allocated his positive freedom to a different agency.

Another source is Kant. Sartre shows his indebtedness to Kant in a long, perceptive essay ("Departure and Return") on the meaning of language. Language is not only a conventional instrument mediating between ourselves and the world; nor is it an insurmountable barrier between ourselves and the world so that poetry becomes, as Fargue said, "the mutual burning of words," and the rest is silence. Sartre uses language, first of all, to show again that there must be a pure Cartesian state of consciousness *before* language—a highly questionable assumption; secondly, that language is a manifestation of the creative, productive function of the mind. To *name* a thing involves, as it does for Kant, a synthesizing activity; and it is through this synthetic, creative act of the mind or the imagination that we construct a common world of words and things. Thus Descartes and Kant support two major assertions: (1) that man's freedom lies in self-consciousness; and (2) that this freedom can be positive and productive in creating a world of words, things, machines, and social systems. "Man is the being as a result of whose appearance a world exists," is Sartre's re-formulation of "humanism."

Sartre is also indebted to Kant for his views on ethics. Moral choices are the most striking exemplifications of man's freedom and autonomy. And though Sartre claims to repudiate the rationalistic, *a priori* foundations of Kant's moral theory, his own solution for escaping a radical ethical subjectivism and relativism is a watered-down restatement of the categorical imperative: My own free choice is justifiable if in choosing myself I can also wish to choose a general, universal type of man.

There is a third source of Sartre's ideas—Marxism; for the new universal man must be revolutionary. Marxism provides the transition from the implicit idealism of Descartes and Kant to the existentialist postulate of revolutionary action. In "Materialism and Revolution," the longest and most important essay in the present volume, Sartre attempts to prove two things: first, that materialism is a false and self-refuting metaphysics for a revolutionary movement; second, that his own version of existentialism is the only true revolutionary philosophy because it avoids the pitfalls and fallacies of both idealism and materialism. Much of this analysis, however, simply shows that the kind of mechanical, crudely scientific materialism which he castigates has nothing to do with the much more subtle and supple theoretical instrument which Marx called "dialectical materialism." Be that as it may—and the question

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is now largely of historical interest—Sartre's criticism of the latter-day, intellectual saints of Communism is both bitter and satirical.

At the same time, it is this very criticism of the philosophical foundations of Communism which throws a peculiar light upon the ambiguity of Sartre's own position. He is most anxious to refute a materialistic determinism, or the belief that the human enterprise is subject to an inexorable dialectical law of "nature." He is just as anxious to replace this "myth" by his own philosophy which proclaims the priority of a free, creative human consciousness in order to introduce, into the world of nature and machines, an ineradicable element of subjectivity and contingency. Yet his anguished cry that this freedom be *for* something remains strangely vacuous and exposes the dubious nature of his own myth.

Sartre is still on fairly safe grounds as long as he clings to the general assertion that this freedom is a precondition for the permanent reconstruction of the human situation (he cites Trotsky's concept of the "permanent revolution" with approval in this sense); but the ground becomes slippery, indeed, as soon as this formal condition is translated into the concrete human and historical situation in which we must choose and act. For then it appears that the "proletariat" is the symbol of the new universal man of our age; and what's worse, it is the proletariat as defined by the official Communist doctrine. Thus while existentialism is supposed to be the revolutionary theory *par excellence,* its manifestation in practice is the Communist party. Or: the philosophical basis of Communism is first shown to be completely false; yet Communist action is asserted to be the only true expression of a revolutionary philosophy. In short, the formal outlines of the existentialist metaphysics of freedom are filled in with the rigid blueprint of the official party line. Surely, this myth is but another form of doublethink. The problem of human freedom begins precisely where Sartre closes his books.

Add to these three sources, a basic concept or two drawn from the reading of Heidegger, and you have what I believe to be the major sources for the system of ideas of which Sartre has become the most conspicuous public symbol.

I haven't said a word about the literary essays. This is not merely a matter of personal preference. I believe that the philosophical essays are the only ones worth reprinting. By contrast, the literary essays are rather thin and dull. Literary criticism, for Sartre, is just another form of philosophical exposition. The result is an impoverishment of the critical apparatus. As a literary critic, Sartre has a few philosophical

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tricks up his sleeve which, at first, are quite surprising and interesting. But since they are produced with great regularity and constant repetition, they tend to become stereotypes. The surprise soon wears off and the interest wanes.

Hans Meyerhoff

POETRY CHRONICLE

POEMS (NORTH & SOUTH; A COLD SPRING). By Elizabeth Bishop. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50.
JOURNEY TO LOVE. By William Carlos Williams. Random House. $3.00.
THE GENTLE WEIGHT LIFTER. By David Ignatow. Morris Gallery. $3.00.
THE NIGHT FISHING. By W. S. Graham. Grove Press. $2.50.
GOOD NEWS OF DEATH AND OTHER POEMS. By Louis Simpson. (IN POETS OF TODAY II.)* Charles Scribners. $3.50.
THE SECOND MAN AND OTHER POEMS. By Louis O. Coxe. University of Minnesota Press. $2.75.
EXILES AND MARRIAGES. By Donald Hall. Viking. $3.00.

Elizabeth Bishop's poetry aspires to a very high order of craft and sensibility—to a perch, say, which only Marianne Moore, among living women poets, precariously occupies. Fellow poets have found in her limited performance a judiciousness and sympathy of the greatest distinction; the effect of her work on Randall Jarrell, for example, has been to put him in a state of permanent exaltation. Such praise is unfortunate—it sets the reader's expectations too high. Miss Bishop has considerable verbal skill, a gift for independent perception, and a habit of making commonplace things appear either charming or unique. Her poetry deserves recognition, but not any more than W. S. Graham's or David Ignatow's, whose work, with all its defects, is a good deal more vital and penetrative than Miss Bishop's. *North & South*, published separately nine years ago, and *A Cold Spring*, together make up her present volume. The poems arrest one by their brilliant surfaces and transparency. But underneath is a curious rigidity, a disturbing lack of movement and affective life, betraying a sprained and uneasy patience. They frequently resemble the fish in her most anthologized poem of that name: caught half-dead, the fight knocked out of it, ". . . a grunting weight, battered and venerable and homely," achieving, in the end, a pyrrhic victory by being thrown back into the sea.

* Also included in this volume, but not reviewed here are: *The Hatch: Poems* by Norma Farber, and *The Irony of Joy: Poems* by Robert Pack.

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"The Map," the first poem in the volume, is a vivid revery on a colored map. Reading it one is momentarily beguiled: is an actual map or the physical topography itself being described? Then one comes on the deliberate anticlimax of the last line: "More delicate than the historians' are the mapmakers' colors." The line states the poet's aim: a scrupulous representation of the world reduced in scale and line to something like a cartographer's depiction of geographical areas. It is a plan for suppressing rather than compressing contours, dimension, tonality, emotion. A slow hard gaze moves behind the deliberately drawn-out ironies. "Florida" is "the state that floats in brackish water,/ held together by the mangrove roots/ that bear while living oysters in clusters,/ and when dead strew white swamps with skeletons. . . ."

If Miss Bishop is the poetic equivalent of the cartographer, she is also the prosaic equivalent of the classical elegiac poet, with herons, roosters, faithful servants, and fishhouses to praise instead of faithless mistresses, athletes, honored statesmen, dead friends. She rarely tries to relate events or undertake subjects that cannot be brought down to scale. Few risks she takes away from scale come off as well as "The bull frogs are sounding, slack strings plucked by heavy thumbs" ("A Cold Spring"). More often, like good camera-eye realism, they achieve a tense but tidy little vignette: "And in the brothels of Marrakesh/ the little pockmarked prostitutes/ balanced their tea-trays on their heads/ and did their belly-dances; flung themselves/ naked and giggling against our knees,/ asking for cigarettes" ("Over 2000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance"). At times the poet steps out in the direction of a controlled fantasying, as in "The Imaginary Iceberg," "The Colder the Air," and "Wading at Wellfleet." But whenever she pushes the fantasy too hard, the insulating control of the irony unravels, and we get the prose-lavish phanopoeia of "Man-Moth" or the exhausting ultra-gnomic distortions of "A Miracle for Breakfast." In "The Weed," we sense that the subject, like the crumb and drop of coffee in the "Miracle," is the center of a huge hallucination, betraying the effort of projecting symbolically into real objects with, and only with, the eye. The subject itself is fantasied away. A similar disjunction occurs in "Monument," where an unresolved irony keeps turning the subject round and around, like a crumb between the fingers, hopeful of transforming it into a loaf of bread. But the strategy is self-defeating: a baneful asking of meaningful questions of a meaningless or essentially unmeaningful object. It is not so much the effort which seems perverse as its particular disposition in the poet's tidy scale. A matter of having one's cake and eating it too: making an effort to give dimension to a flat world, the poet uses the

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cartographer's method and ends up with the historian's falsifying colorations. She fails with the image when trying to make it over into a symbol because the nature of the precise image is to defy symbolization. For similar reasons, her forced synaesthesia reduces reality not to poetry but to a dressing up of coy attitudes: "Think of the storm roaming the sky uneasily/like a dog looking for a place to sleep in,/ listen to it growling" ("Little Exercise"). Another attempt at synaesthesia, doomed from the start, gets converted into a self-conscious literary irony: "the water in the bight doesn't wet anything,/ the color of the gas flame turned as low as possible./ One can smell it turning to gas; if one were Baudelaire/ one could probably hear it turning to marimba music." Weak, unemphatic endings, gnomic anticlimaxes, and forced synaesthesia distort the shape of Elizabeth Bishop's poems. Instead of relieving, the devices call attention to, the flatness of her prosaic lines. The failure is one of setting carefully planned structures in the sands of irrelevance and inconsequence, and so the craft, the true maker's skill she possesses, goes wanting. I recognize that what I have called her risks and failure may all be understood precisely as her successes by another kind of reader—the reader who does not consider the reduction and the ironic strategy as debasements of perception.

Past seventy now, William Carlos Williams has burst into a new greenness, a poetry of clarity, luminosity, and personal affirmation. The turn comes after the anguish and complexities of *Paterson* with *The Desert Music*; and it continues now in *Journey to Love,* with poems that seem to be running, with many backward glances, to heaven. Having tried many types of line, Williams has settled down to a cascading triplet of short, successively indented phrases. The arrangement is perhaps as loose and arbitrary as any other, but it seems to fit the rhythm of a man breathing or a man's voice speaking, intoning, thinking, and cajoling, as he walks or runs. One finds the usual falterings, the asides, the almost too casual loosenesses of phrase that appear in all his work; but this time a strength, a serious, unabated, almost effortless clarity, sustains his speech. It is all alive, taking its own fluid course as surely as a stream leading into the sea. The shorter pieces here, as often in Williams' other books, appear as tributaries to a long poem, "Of Asphodel, That Greeny Flower." We may not be getting his best work now, but it is certainly his most awakened, his purest, his simplest in design. The fact itself is notable during a time when complexities run down shallower courses, if they do not actually congeal.

There is some resemblance to Williams' breathlessness and immediacy of speech in the poetry of David Ignatow. His short bunched poems

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do not develop according to any fixed pattern. Line spills into line, although never very casually. Since his statements are forceful, they dance out, either awkwardly or gracefully, some specific moment of awareness. All of Ignatow's poems try to be actions, eventful and moving, rather than editorials—which is how they sometimes end up when the action is superseded by speculation on its results. Their subjects are the blundering half-nightmares that trip the consciousness, that clutter a wakeful and eager curiosity. In some sense the poems themselves become a way of cleaning house. One discovers a beautiful honesty in such direct statements as "For All Friends": "Talking together, we advance from loneliness/ to where words fall off into space/ and send up no echo. Looking down/ for instruction, we gaze into the crease/ and fold of each other's face./ We are falling from the precipice of heaven,/ our flesh aged by life's upward force./Our words are buried in the falling air./ Deep in the ground, with time's impact,/ we will be one with our words,/ for earth too falls toward eternity." Ignatow is a more diversified poet than this would suggest. Invariably his poems have an ethical core, and they try to get something stated by the way they move. Ignatow writes mostly about the urban world—about salesmen and clients, about fantasists running after buses, about house-builders, museums and suicides, and about the shock of meeting oneself in a room or in another person. "The Painter," a poem of forty lines, and incidentally the longest in the book, is a finely sustained, indivisible unit—one of the best I have read on the subject; which seems to prove that the poet's form is really integral. He makes his poems of whatever length say what they have to say; there is nothing arbitrary about them.

The Scottish poet W. S. Graham writes in much subtler and many different forms but, like Ignatow, is trying to forge an identity and is caught up by typical metaphysical questions in a post-Freudian context: "When I fell down into this place/ My father drew his whole day's pay,/ My mother lay in a set-in bed,/ The midwife threw my bundle away." "The Nightfishing," a long, remarkably fresh symbolic poem in seven sections, has the ruminative melopoeic movement of *Four Quartets*. It is inventive and closely patterned. The poet joins a crew of night-fishermen on a sea-trawler dragging for herring. The fishing is exquisitely described; the poem moves closely with the fishermen's sweeping rhythms and heaving efforts, and glows with the iridescence of the sea, the boat, the fish. While immersed in the trawling the poet describes his sense of the fishing as a spiritual hunt, a search for words; arriving home at dawn, "Now he who takes my place continually anew/ Speaks me thoroughly perished into another./ And the quay opened its

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arms. I heard the sea/ Close on him gently swinging on oiled hinges. Moored here, we cut the motor quiet. He that/ I'm not lies down. Men shout. Words break. I am/ My fruitful share." The details of the fishing are more disarming than some of the metaphysics, but the poem is impressive nevertheless, and stays with one. Graham has a lyrical sense which creates surprising effects out of different levels of diction and verbal textures: "The Clyde sleeved in its firth/ Reached and dazzled me./ I moved and caught the sweet/ Courtesy of your mouth./ My breath to your breath./ And as you lay fondly/ In the crushed smell of the moor/ The courageous and just sun/ Opened its door."

Of the three somewhat younger poets, Louis Simpson's work shows the most character and sensibility, Donald Hall's the lightest weight, and Louis Coxe's the greatest moralism. They all stick close to traditional meters and shape their idioms according to the familiar patterns of Yeats, Robinson, or Auden. In Simpson poetic intelligence and the shape of the poem go together. He has discrimination—a good sense of relevance, a credible seriousness. His poems about women, about the war, and about classical or mythological figures are too well made to be embarrassing. Their themes suit a central preoccupation which, if not yet independently resolved by the poet, is seldom clichéd or dulled by his having handled them. "John the Baptist," one of his longer poems, has concision and considerable driving power, even a kind of fierce beauty. No tired ironies get in the way, as they do in some of his other poems struggling with affirmations. The poem accurately recreates an integral experience.

Coxe and Hall are much more uneasy in their traditional gait. They continually overplay their subjects—Coxe, by melodramatics, Hall, by a measured sort of schoolboyish banter and a fretful concern for good manners. Coxe's world has been trampled on and bruised hard; Hall's is hopeful of being trampled on, so that he is more given to making it look brave and capable of intermittent bravuras. The form of these poets is on constant exhibition, as if up for inspection, like well-oiled rifles and R.O.T.C. uniforms on the parade grounds. Both indulge an appetite for ancestoring around the New England landscape, hunting behind barn doors and old clapboards for lost childhoods, girls, families, Thanksgiving dinners. We have been there before and know the wind's grim reminder through the trees: "Sure, the going is hard—even harder than you think; so grow up, sonny—if you can." Of course, Hall's and Coxe's addiction to mechanical form, their celebration of the proprieties of family life, their mannerliness and conscience, are all ways of ordering or salvaging a part of the world from the sense of loss

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and the fear of total meaninglessness. So that their poetry is already partly an answer to the tough wind's warning. But they have as yet to be gnawed and strengthened by a deeper disorder before their contrivances and resolutions have the look of earned and genuine rewards.

Edwin Honig

THE LONG ORDEAL

THE PATTERN OF WORLD CONFLICT. By G. L. Arnold. Dial Press. $4.00.

In a period of profound social disorder such as the present, perhaps the most useful function of the political analyst and in any event his indispensable first task is to subject the fears and passions engendered by the crisis to the discipline of reason. Unless passions can be domesticated, analysis is impossible; unless the paranoid tendencies inherent in the situation can be checked, discussion will become a forgotten luxury. G.L. Arnold's *The Pattern of World Conflict,* like Raymond Aron's *Century of Total War,* performs this necessary function with impressive success. Both works, to be sure, have in common a certain bloodless quality, a tendency to reduce complicated and anguished dilemmas to something less than life size, and an overvaluation of the rational at the expense of the demonic, but these minor defects are almost implicit in any effort to restore the supremacy of reason. One has the heartening sense in reading Arnold, as with Aron, that the many diverse forces are comprehensible and to that extent manageable. If there is no "pattern" to the world conflict, we must hypothesize one. This not only serves as a preliminary to discussion but also counteracts the failure of nerve that is always incipient in a time of constant strife and seeming chaos. As Arnold observes, a world in flux and reflux has "given rise to defeatism and even to a species of panic." When confidence is widely shaken and old myths no longer sustain, only reason can outwit panic and nourish faith. Indeed, the exercise of reason becomes itself an act of faith.

Arnold's forte is economic analysis, and his hypothesis is predicated on the play of economic forces rather than on moral or political factors. A dedicated advocate of planning and an emancipated Socialist who makes use of Marxist insights in discriminating fashion, he is at his strongest in plotting those points where economics, politics, and ideology intersect.

He offers a dual thesis: the need for the reorganization of the At-

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lantic Community and for the planned industrialization of the undeveloped countries. The free world's historic European base has disintegrated with the collapse of the international free market economy of the nineteenth century and the concomitant breakdown of the division of labor between Europe and the rest of the world. The rise of the United States, the slowdown of industrial growth in Britain, the modernization of India, China, and Japan, the frantic search of clashing imperialisms for markets and territories, and the emergence of industrialism as a worldwide phenomenon signaled the breakdown of the old system by the end of the nineteenth century. The exhaustion of European capital resources in two world wars concluded its demise.

No exclusively Europeans solutions, he argues, can now reconstruct a viable system. America's enormous industrial base, productive capacity, and capital resources are the core of any solution. An Atlantic system must be devised which envisages some merging of sovereignty, common military and economic planning, and massive capital investment by the United States. The Marshall Plan is the proper point of departure for such a system. He pertinently observes that only American "offshore procurement" (the purchase overseas of military goods) masks the chronic dollar gap and serves in a sense as a gigantic pump-priming device for Europe as the entire military budget does for the domestic economy.

A program of this kind differs markedly from the post-1945 experiments, which combined universalist paper schemes with strictly regional planning for defense. . . . .It is the special curse of the post-war world that the utopianism of the peacemakers has driven it into an unreal choice between an empty universalism and a purely military regionalism unsupported by any wider considerations, indifferent to public support, and not based on genuine political or economic foundations: a choice between the UN and NATO. The choice lies midway between these extremes. . . . ."Functional cooperation" has had its day, and so has the pretense that western Europe is full of great powers able and willing to cooperate on an equal footing with the United States.

There is not likely to be any serious dissent to these proposals. An Atlantic Community in some more coherent form is almost certain to take shape over the next decade even though it meets stubborn opposition here and abroad.

Arnold's thesis concerning the need for planning the rapid industrialization of the undeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, is essentially a plea for national governments in these regions to assume through various modes of "state capitalism" the entrepreneurial function traditionally exercised in Western Europe and the United

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States by the business classes and the free market. Here Arnold marshals his arguments with telling force.

If the undeveloped areas are to be kept in the non-Communist sector, their economic development must have a socially revolutionary content and a conscious political direction. The impact of technology and industrial development disrupts and disorients the petrified social systems of backward societies. There is neither time nor circumstances favorable to the slow accumulation of capital and the gradual emergence of a native entrepreneurial class. Outside technical assistance, piece-meal private investment, and sporadic foreign loans and grants accelerate the industrializing process but in a haphazard manner and with no clear view to the social effects.

The Soviet Union, by contrast, has demonstrated that total planning can speed up the process markedly in a backward society and at the same time provide a new sense of "social integration." There are now élites of intellectuals and technicians in every undeveloped country eager to emulate this example and impose "revolutions from above."

The Western powers have thus far responded to this challenge timidly and negatively with vague talk of development and technical aid.

> Implicit in this kind of talk there is an assumption that, given the requisite economic impetus, the social milieu will look after itself. But this is not so; taken by themselves, market forces do not promote modern capitalism, any more than they help to strengthen liberal democracy (or democratic socialism for that matter). . . .
>
> Where "bourgeois society" has not prepared the ground for it, the industrialization drive tends. . .to accentuate the social tensions of a disintegrating precapitalist milieu.

Here we touch the heart of the matter in all considerations of coping with the undeveloped countries of the free world. Capitalism in its nascent form intensifies the gaps between classes, the infusion of outside capital breeds inflation, the early stages of industrialization require sacrifices of consumer needs in favor of capital investment, acquaintance with higher material standards arouses consumer demands that cannot be met and frequently encourages population growth in already overpopulated countries. This politically explosive complex of pressures is more likely to end in totalitarian tyranny than in the attainment of wider freedom.

In the course of a brilliant exposition of the interconnections between social revolution and nationalism, between the peasantry and the professional revolutionaries, Arnold observes that in the West "there is

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obstinate resistance to the idea that nationalists may actually prefer Communism *because* it is totalitarian—i.e., calculated to destroy all traditional obstacles to rapid modernization."

On this crucial issue of the political component of a development program, Arnold is nonetheless inadequate. He rightly characterizes the likes of Syngman Rhee as rather weak reeds and urges cooperation with "libertarian revolutionaries." But what if, as in Korea, no such political figures exist? "The modernization of a hitherto backward country sets up stresses that reinforce the need for a strong central government," he observes. But doesn't this beg the question? Indonesia sorely needs a strong central government, but it has not yet proved possible to bring one into existence.

There is the further problem of a country such as Egypt which is receptive to large-scale foreign assistance and has a strong government of a sort but is woefully weak in the managerial-technician stratum, vexed with corruption, and given to futile military adventures.

The West's vital weakness in the competition with the Soviet Union in the undeveloped countries is its lack of a political apparatus. The Russians can intervene in each country's domestic politics through the local Communist parties without seeming to do so. The West, lacking such an instrument, frequently appears clumsy and overt in its efforts to give political direction to change.

It cannot be said that Arnold minimizes these problems even if he cannot offer any clear guides to their solution. The main burden of his argument is certainly persuasive. The West is not free simply to choose between democratic and semi-totalitarian forces when these alternatives are unreal. A Tito or an Atatürk or a Nasser may often prove the best that is available. Nor can it afford to hold out for the existence of conventional capitalist forms or for the banker's "sound" criteria of political stability and orthodox fiscal policy before giving economic aid.

The problems innate in the approach he suggests are incalculably difficult, but this difficulty does not vitiate the wisdom of his call for Western assistance to "state capitalist" planning or the excellence of his analysis of the fundamental forces at work in the world. The undeveloped countries are in for a long ordeal. It is our ordeal as well.

William Shannon

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A PERSPECTIVE ON CRITICISM

A HISTORY OF MODERN CRITICISM: 1750-1950 (Vol. I: The Later Eighteenth Century. Vol. II: The Romantic Age). By René Wellek. Yale University Press. $5 each.

It may be an Age of Criticism in which we are living—it undoubtedly is—but it is not an age that has always been very acutely or instructedly aware of its own antecedents; and the temporal provinciality of some of our criticism, even when it has had other merits, has sometimes been a heavy limitation. We are all guilt-ridden here in some degree or other, and for that reason every one of us can find his account in, and draw instruction from, these two extraordinary volumes of Mr. Wellek's. They have come, one is tempted to feel, in the nick of time, and may very well have the clarifying, cartographic, signpost effect on contemporary criticism that the older nineteenth-century histories of literature generally—Taine, De Sanctis, Brandes—had on the writing that followed them. Only the most irreconcilable contemners of history—history of ideas, history of the arts, history of literature —will be able to hold out against them.

It has been half a century since anyone has tried to do this particular thing—to write the history of modern criticism on a European, not merely a national, scale—and when it was last done, as it was by Saintsbury, who indeed took all criticism from Plato on for his province, the book that resulted was enormously vigorous, hearty, and appreciative, but it suffered badly, too, from Saintsbury's constitutional incapacity to deal with general ideas or even to take them seriously. This is exactly the capacity that Mr. Wellek has in an eminent degree, and if his history has much less the effect of an immense banquet, complete with wines and brandies, than Saintsbury's had, it has much more the effect of a solid meal, by no means without its vinous accompaniment, which one would not be likely to regret the next day.

These, of course, are the first two of four projected volumes which are to tell the story of modern literary criticism from about the middle of the eighteenth century to our own time. They deal with, roughly, the first half of that story—the period which began with the gradual subsidence of the neo-classicism that had prevailed for a couple of centuries, and ended with the settling down (and the mapping by philosophers) of the romanticism that had washed over and submerged it. Mr. Wellek's first volume begins with Voltaire, the last (except for small fry) of the complete neo-classicists, and his second volume ends

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with Hegel, who codified (and in a sense, laid out, as for burial) the romanticism of his German predecessors. What intervenes is the account of a great shift in literary sensibility as it was reflected in criticism—the shift from a veneration for reason, for objective representation, the typical and the general, impersonality, order, and regularity, to a passion for subjectivity, feeling, the individual and idiosyncratic, and the spontaneous, the expressive, the organic. The story is told, not as an impersonal "history of ideas," but in a series of chapters that expound and comment on the views, the insights, the tastes, of a series of great individual figures and some minor men.

The story is an absorbing one, and suggests a multitude of reflections, but in any case it inspires extreme admiration for the success with which Mr. Wellek has told it. This success is owing in part to his erudition: he is at home in the languages and literatures of England, France, Germany, and Italy (to speak only of those represented fully in these volumes), and is rescued thus from the cultural provinciality that has too often led to badly mistaken attributions of originality, primacy, and the like, as well as to other astigmatisms. The most sensational example in these volumes, I suppose, is Mr. Wellek's treatment of Coleridge, who has come close to deification by some English and American critics: the extent to which Coleridge drew upon and even plagiarized (the harsh word seems unavoidable) such German writers as Kant, A. W. Schlegel, and Schelling has never yet been made so evident as Mr. Wellek makes it, and it will simply force a revised estimate of Coleridge's inventive significance.

A revised estimate, but not an equally exaggerated one at the negative pole. Nothing is more striking in this history than the care with which Mr. Wellek preserves a balance, a studious justice, in his valuation not only of Coleridge but of a long list of other critical writers. His final judgment of Coleridge is a disappointed one—he speaks in some despair of the "random eclecticism" of his mind—but meanwhile he has seen how great was the service Coleridge performed in the transmission of German literary ideas to the English-speaking world, and has done justice to what was strong and positive in Coleridge's work—his firm grasp, for example, on the principle of dialectical and organic unity in poetry. "Nevertheless"—"however"—"this does not mean that": these are characteristic locutions of Mr. Wellek's, and they indicate that he knows how to save himself from the bigotry, the rigidity, the one-eyed partisanship that in our time have too often ended in wholly uncritical judgments of the criticism of the past. This disinterestedness of Mr. Wellek's has cooperated with what is almost more important—his intel-

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lectual intrepidity—in enabling him to ignore a whole series of stereotyped estimates and to put his finger on what is valid and usable in the work of writers who have fallen into discredit—or, sometimes, on what is fruitless in the work of writers who have risen into something like sacrosanctity.

T. S. Eliot, for example, once remarked that Dr. Johnson was a dangerous man to disagree with; Mr. Wellek seems not to be painfully conscious of this danger, and quite frankly (though not quite idiomatically) describes Johnson as "one of the first great critics who has almost ceased to understand the nature of art, and who, in central passages, treats art as life." Eliot once also alluded disparagingly to Hazlitt's criticism (to the "uninterestingness," as I remember it, of his mind); Mr. Wellek, at the same time that he sees perfectly clearly how limited Hazlitt was on the side of analysis and of aesthetic theory, has written so sympathetically of what is *interesting* in him—particularly of his primacy in the criticism that depends on evocation, metaphor, and personal reference—as to have initiated, surely, a reinstatement of Hazlitt in the ranks of important critics. It is not fashionable, moreover, to speak with respect of Victor Hugo either as poet or as critic, and Mr. Wellek is perfectly aware of all that is windy, vague, pseudo-prophetic in his critical writing. But he is aware also of the presence in it of "profound insights and brilliant formulas"; he has discovered certain passages in Hugo's book on Shakespeare "which show a remarkable insight into a mythic conception of poetry and anticipate the Jungian view of literature as a creation of 'archetypal patterns.'" Another ancestor is thus happily rescued from the mausoleum.

What makes it possible for Mr. Wellek to carry on these revisions, these rescues and rejections, is that he is not committed to any simplistic, reductive, and illiberal conception of what criticism *ought* to be. He is committed to *a* conception of it, as everyone knows who has read his and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature*; and no such reader would expect him to attempt the history of modern criticism in the spirit of an impossible, professorial impartiality or "pure" objectivity. He has a sharp eye for what is really obsolete in neo-classicism—its incapacity, for example, to think historically—and for what is sterile in some romanticisms—their tendency, for example, to identify and confuse poetry and prophecy. He is writing quite deliberately from the point of view of the literary mentality of our time, with our insistence on drawing clear lines between what is a work of art and what is simply vital reality, with our bias toward the operocentric (if I may use an ugly word for concentration on the individual work), with our emphasis

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on the autonomy of a work, its organic wholeness and compactness, its "dialectical" reconciliation of opposites. He is writing also from the other point of view that belongs quite as much to our own time as this—the point of view according to which the understanding and the valuation of a literary work can be immensely enhanced and enriched by bringing to bear on the study of it *whatever* new knowledge is available and in any way relevant—psychological, anthropological, linguistic, or what not. In short, Mr. Wellek is writing the history of modern criticism from the point of view of what he has called Perspectivism, which is of course a kind of eclecticism, not a "random" one surely, nor a feebly academic one, but one (as the word itself ought to suggest) that involves a catholic but not in any sense whatever an undiscriminating *choice* of approaches to understanding and judgment.

This has made it possible for him to survey the history of criticism since the mid-eighteenth century with an instrument at once precise and flexible, firm and yet elastic; and, in consequence, to enlighten incalculably our sense of what it is we have behind us, and how much of it is still creatively present—dialectically transcended, to be sure, but not merely "superseded"—in our own critical thought and practice. What it comes to is that that thought and practice represent a certain synthesis, a tentative and developing one, of neo-classicism (the "thesis") and romanticism (the "antithesis"). So far as neo-classicism signifies a strong sense of the whole tradition of literature, a belief in the possible objectivity and normality of critical values, and a preoccupation with general standards of style and structure—to that extent, and even farther, it being dead yet liveth. So far as romanticism signifies an imaginative sense of history (as distinguished from *tradition*), a deeply philosophical conception of the imagination, a view of the work of literature as an organic whole in which contrarieties are reconciled, and an essentially new grasp of the meaning of metaphor, symbol, and myth—to that extent, and much farther, it is not dead but alive. The present age has gone beyond both the neo-classical and the romantic, and has fortunately discarded much nonsense that was associated with both. Our own nonsense will be sloughed off in due season, and meanwhile this history of Mr. Wellek's will make the whole task of keeping our heads and sharpening our wits a great deal easier than it would otherwise be.

Newton Arvin

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PRAGMATIC RELIGIOSITY

PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC-JEW: An Essay in American Religious Sociology. By Will Herberg. Doubleday. $4.00.

If one judges by the campaign addresses of General Eisenhower in 1952, the unbelievable success of "inspirational" books, the concern for religious sentiment in public education—in sum, the myriad examples of popular religious identification now being charted by researchers and statisticians, it is apparent that a healthy America is being thought increasingly synonymous with a religious America. This is a rather forbidding conclusion, but *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* by Will Herberg leaves no other conclusion possible. Herberg documents, with care and selective intelligence, the vague but pervasive phenomenon of the American religious revival, a revival born, by and large, of the well-intentioned, unreflective groping for tradition that characterizes much of what is called American culture.

Herberg has no thesis, nor is it necessary that he have one. The importance of his work is that it discloses, albeit with charity and good sense, the facts of the American religious revival and estimates their significance. Religion is seen as a part of the problem of the settlement of America; the desperate effort of the late-comers to acclimate themselves to an Anglo-Saxon Protestantism that not only had fixed its own forms of worship, but had projected those forms and their associated social and cultural commitments upon the whole of American life. The problem of the European-born American was how to hold on to old traditions while learning to acquire new. By and large they succeeded too well in the former endeavor, while failing signally in the latter. It was up to the second generation to refuse, to turn back the passport—to become resolutely and unambiguously American. With the Americanization of the second generation the German language churches, the Yiddish *verbande,* the Polish sermons disappeared. Americans all, irrespective of national origin, formed parishes along religious, rather than ethnic or national lines. Religion emerged in the third generation, "the generation of the return," as the means of holding on to a vanishing European past. Religion acquired as well the respectability of belonging, of identifying with the great American diversity, the ideal pluralism. The fourth religion, the American religion that is no religion, became the justification of being religious. Whatever you are, be something, is

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the conclusion that emerges time and again from the statistics Herberg presents. Keep religion out of politics, out of business, out of public ethics; retain the God of vagueness and good temper; worship and pray as long as it is in taste and decorum. This becomes the image of the religious revival.

It is beside the point to comment that this is no religion recognizable to Augustine, Pascal, the Baal Shem, or Kierkegaard. Neither the religion of philosophers, nor the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This observation need not be pressed. The serious question, it seems to me, is can one ask for more at this moment?

There is in the history of the West a legitimate distinction to be drawn between the ages of religious creativity and genius and the ages of tradition and faith. The former transformed a society cast adrift, shaped the uprooted, located their role in time and slanted their eschatological focus beyond time to the point of consummation. The cataclysm of Sinai (for indeed the historicity of Sinai is now beyond dispute) was constituted by the divine wrenching of a people from formlessness to form, from the passion of distraught and wandering hysterics into a nation henceforth called "holy." Such transformation was repeated in the career of Paul the Apostle and the dominion of Augustine and St. Benedict, as well as in the age of the Reformation. The creativity of these ages is, as in all creativity, the inspired seizure of the right moment, the taking of matter that yields to form, the giving of meaning, and the inauguration of tradition.

The ages of faith commence at that moment in history when the form is fixed, when the task shifts from that of founding to that of perpetuating. Not enough that God should be present at Sinai, that the thunder should rumble and the cry of the ram's horn break the heavens, not enough that six hundred thousand should know that on this peak is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. It is necessary that God speak, that he fix for all time his Law. Nor is it enough that, for the Christian, God break into time with the extremity of the perfect God-Man. Peter must come to found a church and Paul to define its doctrines. It is to later generations of scholastics, to Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas, to bring the universe into the order of the dispensation, to surround divinity with the admiring choir-stalls of philosophy, art, and literature. These are the ages that take the sacrament into the market place, that build communities out of commitment, form societies in *imitatio dei,* that elaborate the allegories of scripture, and define the subtleties of natural law. The ages of faith, not mere ages of casuistry, spell out the

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hidden implications of the creative moment, take the whole of man and fix his function and destiny.

Martin Buber has suggested in his essay "What is Man?" that there are two intellectual traditions discernible in the history of the human spirit: those of habitation and those of homelessness. In the former man is at home in the world. The world is familiar, accessible, at the disposal of man. His categories fit, his principles work, the universe is described and located. The traditions of homelessness dislocate the fixities of the spirit. In such traditions man's independence and creativity are reasserted. The ages of religious upheaval, when the spirit of man is disengaged from its moorings, bring forth the religious genius, the genius not born to contemplate, but to lead. So Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Paul, Luther.

The American religion, the religion that is more than Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, by being none and undercutting all, is a religion without God, although a religion with faith. It is the faith, as Herberg notes, in faith, in workability, in "it all turning out right." It is the faith in the garbled mystique of the nation—the melange of hymns, anthems, flags, heroes, and holidays. God, not the object of union, is the great ratifier, the great approver of our devices.

The problem is that modern man is neither at home in the world nor adrift, neither with principles that illumine and inform the universe with meaning nor with anxieties, sufficiently pressing, to cause him to seek. The third generation, to whom Will Herberg rightly dedicates his book, is the critical generation. If they wish the religion of the wanderer, they must first pass through the agonies of the wanderer. If they wish the anchor of tradition, they cannot form tradition *cum saltus,* they must take one that is at hand and return it to its course. More likely than either choice will be the lonely way of the single man. It is he who, quietly, unspectacularly, changes nothing but makes the change possible; who illumines the contradictions of the age, sets men back to their finitude, brings them to their confrontation. It is they who die with parchments of ecstatic confession sewn into the lining of their garments.

Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew,* constructed with care and brilliance, leads me to one conclusion: the American religious revival is the revival of the husk, the outer garment. It remains to be seen what is sewn in the lining.

Arthur A. Cohen

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APOLLINAIRE AND GEORGE

APOLLINAIRE. By Marcel Adéma, translated by Denise Folliot. Grove Press. $3.50.
STEFAN GEORGE. By E. K. Bennett. Yale University Press. $2.50.

Both Guillaume Apollinaire and Stefan George came to literary maturity in the international poetic climate created by the Symbolist movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. George was born in 1868, and he was received, as a young man, at Mallarmé's famous Tuesday evenings at the rue de Rome. This French influence was decisive for his development; and in an excellent poem cited by Mr. Bennett, he records his debt to Mallarmé, Villiers de L'Isle Adam and Verlaine. Apollinaire, born in 1880, was never a member of Mallarmé's inner circle; but his poems clearly show traces of Symbolist influence.

Like all literary movements, of course, Symbolism contained diverse currents within itself. Edmund Wilson has distinguished the serious-esthetic current of Mallarmé, which always maintained a certain grandeur of tone, from the conversational-ironic current of LaForgue and Corbière. One might also distinguish a lyrical-pathetic current to characterize Verlaine and one aspect of Rimbaud. Within this stylistic framework, both Apollinaire and George chose the means that best corresponded to their artistic needs and developed them in their own direction.

Apollinaire carried the conversational line of Symbolist style even farther forward, abandoning punctuation altogether because, as he wrote in a letter to Henri Martineau, "the very rhythm and division of the lines are the real punctuation and nothing else is needed." At the same time, he fused this casual style with lyric-pathetic themes of sentiment and nostalgia, and with a very effective use of urban and traditionally nonpoetic imagery. George, on the other hand, carried forward the serious-esthetic line of Mallarmé and the Parnassians (his poetry resembles the latter as much as the former), writing in a highly pictorial and severely controlled manner. Even George's lyrics have a solemnity of movement that has caused some German critics to accuse him of lacking musicality. And George's overwhelming sense of his prophetic mission certainly derived from the exalted conception of literature cherished by Mallarmé, although Mallarmé's modesty never allowed him any illusions as to the practical role his poetry and personality might allow him to assume.

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If we compare the two poets with each other, we can see a curious and interesting interchange of national poetic styles. Apollinaire sought for—and achieved—some of the songlike lyricism of the German *lied*; George sought for, and also achieved, some of the marmoreal quality that has marked French poetry since the triumph of the classical tradition.

Guillaume Apollinaire was a mercurial, happy-go-lucky person with a great gusto for life and an almost childlike excitement before the new, the strange and the exciting. His real name was Wilhelm de Kostrowitzsky, and he was the illegitimate son of an Italian nobleman and a young Polish girl of good family who ran away with him from her convent. Apollinaire's ancestry was the subject of considerable speculation among his friends. Picasso, as a joke, started the rumor that he was the son of a Catholic bishop; and Apollinaire never denied the story. Modern scholarship, however, has now triumphed over all of Apollinaire's reticences as well as his amused penchant for harmless myth-making.

Apollinaire's father vanished mysteriously when he was about five years old; his mother, after this time, had a series of "protectors." One cannot help thinking, in reading about Apollinaire's childhood, of the very similar description of Lafcadio in Gide's *Les caves du Vatican*. And the wayward charm of Apollinaire's personality does seem to resemble the impression created by Gide's seductive young scoundrel. Apollinaire, however, was not as fortunate as Lafcadio financially; for he had to earn his living from an early age as tutor, hack writer of erotica, and free-lance critical journalist.

A spell of tutoring in Germany immersed Apollinaire in the Rhenish atmosphere reflected in some of the poems in *Alcools*, and it led to the unsuccessful pursuit of a young English governess employed by the same family. The young lady fled Apollinaire's importunities to—of all places! —California; it must have seemed like the end of the world in 1904. She is still alive there, quite astonished at the posthumous fame of her young suitor and her own reflected glory.

When Apollinaire returned to France from Germany in 1903, his gift for friendship and his literary ambitions quickly brought him into contact with the group of young writers and artists who are now among the great names of modern times. Picasso mentioned Marie Laurencin to Apollinaire, and when the two met the result was a famous liaison that lasted four years and turned the poet into an art critic. Apollinaire was one of the first to write about Picasso; and his *Méditations esthé-*

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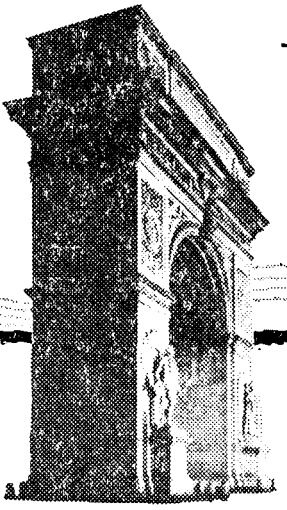

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tiques—a series of impressionistic studies of his painter-friends like Braque, Picasso, Juan Gris and Marie Laurencin—paved the way for all the later defenders of modern art. Apollinaire's writing was also largely responsible for the reputation of the Douanier Rousseau; and M. Adéma reprints a delightful poem by Apollinaire, improvised for the occasion of a banquet to Rousseau, that displays all the warm spontaneity and grace of his temperament.

Marcel Adéma follows Apollinaire's life carefully and scrupulously to his death in 1919 as the indirect result of a war wound.[1] His book is unpretentious and rather simple-minded, written by a hero-worshipper who wishes to convince us that Apollinaire's reputation as a faintly sinister character is wholly undeserved. Apollinaire was hardly a model citizen in the bourgeois sense; but compared with any number of modern French poets—Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Corbière among others—his few escapades are harmless enough. Compared with the later antics of the Dadaists and Surrealists, the good-natured and epicurean Apollinaire seems a tower of robust vitality and emotional balance.

M. Adéma has some perfunctory appreciations of Apollinaire's poetry, of which he happily quotes a good deal in the course of the book. But he says nothing about the shift in perspective about Apollinaire as a poet that has occurred in French criticism. At the time of his death, the more sensational side of Apollinaire was taken up by the literary *avant-garde*—the Apollinaire of the *calligrammes* (poems printed in the form of pictures) and of the "poem-conversations" (poems composed by having different people each make up a few lines). All this seemed terribly exciting at the time, but like many other such earth-shaking innovations its staleness has now become terribly oppressive.

Apollinaire's flirtation with Italian Futurism, dating from 1913, led to the composition of a few good poems like "Zone" and "Vendémiare." Here, Apollinaire's characteristically plaintive melody gives way to a Whitmanesque catalogue of the jazzy surface details of modern life.

1 One gets tired of complaining of translations, since American publishers pay so little attention to their quality. But there is no reason why a book should be translated into English by someone whose command of the language is shaky. This is clearly the case with the translator of M. Adéma's book, who worked conscientiously but who has no ear whatever for an English phrase. The translation, as a result, is stiff, awkward, and sometimes unintelligible.

The publishers also promise, on the dust jacket, a bibliography of critical writings *about* Apollinaire. This may have been contained in the original but is not in the translation.

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Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut
Voilà la poesie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux
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The continuity of these poems is scrambled a good deal, and they were accordingly labeled "cubist" when they first appeared. What still gives them their freshness, though, is Apollinaire's ability to turn his catalogues into vivid symbols of that most ancient of poetic themes—the transience of time. Nothing dates so quickly as the very latest fashion; and each detail of Apollinaire, accentuating the frenzy of change, at the same time evokes the will-of-the-wisp poignancy of the uncapturable moment. These poems started what might be called the *wagon-lit* school of modern international exoticism, in which far-flung place-names are sprinkled as liberally as labels on a traveler's trunk. A good deal of the early Archibald MacLeish owes as much to this aspect of Apollinaire as to Ezra Pound.

Lately, however, it has been recognized that the increasing popu-

* "You read the prospectuses the catalogues the billboards that sing loudly/Here is poetry this morning and as for prose there are the newspapers/There are the serials costing 25 cents full of cops-and-robbers stories"

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larity of Apollinaire (whose work is now the subject of a course at the Sorbonne) is based on a far more traditional appeal. This appeal has been excellently described by Marcel Raymond in his fundamental book, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*. Apollinaire's poems, M. Raymond writes, display a "tender and melancholy sentimentality which sometimes resembles Nerval, sometimes Verlaine, sometimes Heine, and they are nourished at the springs of popular lyricism. Lays and complaints, ballads and romances haunt his memory." It is not Apollinaire the *enfant terrible,* then, who has found his place in the corpus of French poetry. Rather, it is the poet whose "Le pont de Mirabeau" has practically become a folksong, and who could truthfully write of himself, in his most famous poem:

Moi qui sais des lais pour les reines
Les complaintes de mes années
Des hymnes d'esclaves aux murènes
La romance du mal-aimé
*Et des chansons pour les sirènes.**

Stefan George is a very different kind of poet from Apollinaire and a very different kind of man. Instead of the carefree Bohemianism of Apollinaire, we find in George an obsessive and what can only be called a peculiarly German need for discipline, order and conformity. This need revealed itself in every aspect of his life and work. It is typical, for instance, that George instinctively rejected the Symbolist experiments in free verse, even though he was otherwise deeply indebted to Symbolist poetry. "The strictest measure is at the same time the greatest freedom," he wrote of poetry. In this imperious sophism, we catch a good deal of George's quality as a poet and as a man. And this quality may well explain why George, who had a more widespread impact on German culture than either Rilke or Hofmannsthal, is nonetheless not as well-known outside Germany as his great contemporaries.

Mr. Bennett's little book on George, although written in a pedestrian fashion, is a serious, well-informed and very useful introduction to George's work. When George began to write, German poetry was dominated by a tradition of facile folksong lyricism. George, largely under French influence, reacted against this tradition very much as Apollinaire reacted against the studied formalism of French poetry under the influence of Heine and Nerval (the latter, it should be remembered, was

* "I who know stanzas for the queens/Ballads for my growing-old/The hymns of slaves to the lampreys/The romance of one ill-loved/And some songs for the sirens."

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the translator of *Faust* into French). As Mr. Bennett points out, there has always been a minor line of self-consciously plastic and emotionally reticent verse in German literature—a line running from Goethe's *Römische Elegien* (which Mr. Bennett unaccountably fails to mention) through Platen and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. Leaving Goethe aside, George is certainly the greatest German practitioner of this kind of poetry; and he manages to infuse it with a dramatic life that frequently overcomes its inherent tendency to coldness.

George's early poetry is that of the fashionable *fin de siècle* world-weariness and ennui. He was close to English Pre-Raphaelitism as well as to French Symbolism, and the imagery and figures of some of these poems resemble the former more than the latter. There is little of the wavering sensuality of the French Symbolists, but a good deal of the gauzy Botticelli atmosphere of Rossetti and Walter Pater:

Nun bist du reif, nun schwebt die Herrin nieder
Mondfarbne gazeschleier sie umschlingen,
Halboffen ihre traumesschweren lider
*Zu dir geneigt die segnung zu vollbringen**

These early lines are a skillful imitation of the period style, but very soon George was using his mastery of atmospheric color for more original poetic effects. His next few books were cycles of poems—dramatic monologues, terse descriptions, sharply etched symbolic incidents—each projecting some possibility of life as embodied in a historical period or an actual historical figure like the infamous Roman Emperor Heliogabalus. But George did not aim at accurate historical re-creations, like Leconte de Lisle and the Parnassians; he used the aura of history rather than its substance—as Mallarmé did in "Hérodiade" or Yeats in "Sailing to Byzantium." And, as in Yeats's poem, we find in George the same

* "Now you are ripe. Earthward the Mistress flies,/Moon-colored veils of gauze around her clinging;/Half open are her dream-encumbered eyes;/She bends to you, her benediction bringing."

The translation, by Cyril Scott, is taken from *The Heritage of Symbolism,* by C. M. Bowra.

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preference for an artificial universe that is entirely a construction of the human spirit:

Mein garten bedarf nicht luft and nicht wärme,
Der garten den ich mir selber erbaut
Und seiner vogel leblose schwärme
*Haben noch nie einen fruhling geschaut.**

In George's book *Das Teppich des Lebens* (The Tapestry of Life), published in 1908, a significant change occurs in his poetry. Up to this time George had been a writer who, like his fellow-Symbolists, had exhibited a marked distaste for the modern world; and the emotional atmosphere of his work reflected moods of frustration, resignation and despairing withdrawal. Now, however, George's poetry becomes imbued with the sense of a positive mission, symbolized by the figure of an angel who comes to announce to the poet the ideal of *"das schöne Leben."* This ideal remains at the center of George's work, and it may be roughly described as a revivification of Greek harmony: *"Hellas ewig unsre*

* "My garden needs no light and no warmth,/The garden that for myself I have built/And the swarming flocks of its lifeless birds/Never yet have looked out on a springtime."

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Liebe" (Hellas eternally our beloved). Now, too, the idea of a select spiritual community enters George's poetry—a community which, rejecting the vulgarity of the present, incarnates a life based on the heroic, aristocratic ideal of the Greeks and on their classical equilibrium of the spirit and the senses.

Most revivals of the Greek ideal in modern times have been colored by homoerotic tendences, and George's *"schöne Leben"* was no exception to this rule. Indeed, his love for a young German boy whom he called Maximin led to one of the most extraordinary episodes in modern literature. George had met Maximin when the boy was thirteen and George himself thirty-six; Maximin died a few years later at the age of sixteen. In Maximin George saw the living embodiment of his ideals, and he celebrated him in poetry as the incarnate deity of his new religion. George's relation with Maximin resulted in some beautiful poetry, more lyrical and passionate than any he had ever written before. But George wanted Maximin to be more than a poetic inspiration: he wanted him to be a god. And as Mr. Bennett remarks, this deification of Maximin "constitutes the stumbling block for many an appreciative reader of George's poetry. . . . For Maximin emerges not merely as a symbol of the god-head but as the god himself."

George's effort to deify Maximin is the culmination of the overweening spiritual ambition that betrays itself throughout his career—an ambition that he shares, however, with other great exemplars of the Symbolist movement. Yeats too, after all, wrote in *A Vision* that he would "proclaim a new divinity." But we feel in Yeats's poetry an ironic temper and a human wisdom that is never wholly absorbed by the fanaticism of the prophet. And Yeats never set about seriously trying to convince us that one of *his* friends was the incarnate god—or, since his tastes were more orthodox, the incarnate goddess. George, it is true, occasionally had doubts about his own incarnate god; but these only resulted in a more desperate effort to impose conviction on himself:

War der gott der mich erleuchtet
War der geist der mir erschienen
Fern aus unermessnen höhn?
Hab ich selber ihn geboren?
*Schweig gedanke! Seele bete!**

In the course of his discussion, Mr. Bennett mentions Thomas

* "Was the god to me revealed/Was the spirit to me divulged/Distant as from immeasurable heights?/Did I give him birth myself?/Silence, thought! Soul, be prayerful!"

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Mann's *Death in Venice* as an implicit criticism of George's estheticism. It is unfortunate that he does not dwell longer on this illuminating confrontation; for though Mr. Bennett does not say so, this story was written at least partially with the influence of George and his circle in mind. Mann's masterpiece depicts the dangers of an exclusively esthetic approach to the problems of life, the attempt to base a morality on the worship of art and beauty. Gustave von Aschenbach had spent his life devoted to the discipline of art and the creation of beauty; but in yielding to the fascination of beauty in the flesh, von Aschenbach finds himself betraying the high idealism and the self-discipline that had originally inspired his love of art. The worship of beauty in reality has far different practical consequences than the creation of art; the confusion of art and reality leads to disaster and degradation. Mann depicts this conflict on the level of personal morality; but it can easily be taken, with a little symbolic extension, as an amazingly clairvoyant picture of what happened to the later George in his political role.

When George ceased being only a poet and turned to political exhortation, he began, like von Aschenbach, to confuse art and reality. He used the religion of Maximin (the religion of the body deified and the deified body, as Mr. Bennett paraphrases one of George's most famous

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lines) as a platform from which to launch more and more violent and intemperate attacks against a modern world that was very far indeed from embodying any heroic beauty. More, he prophesied its total destruction in a purifying holocaust that would clear the way for a society in accord with his esthetic visions. Once transferred from poetry into political terms, however, George's estheticism took on a very sinister aspect; a good many members of the German intelligentsia (not George himself, it is only fair to add) took the advent of the Nazis as a fulfillment of George's jeremiads.

A very friendly critic, C. M. Bowra, has pointed out that "the swastika had long appeared in his [George's] books. He had introduced such phrases as *'der Führer'* and *'Heil.'* He had proclaimed the superiority of instinct to brains, of deep inherited qualities to anything imposed from without. He had preached the beauties of *'Gemeinschaft'* and corporate life, the heroic ideal and the right of the German to lands not his own, the inferior position of women as wives and mothers, the government of mankind by a select class." Of course George had meant all this quite differently, quite spiritually; and we should not forget that he went into exile in 1933 and died in Switzerland the same year. Yet there is no doubt that George, in setting up his esthetic ideal as a

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political program, helped to create the hysterical atmosphere that brought about the destruction of everything he valued.

George's stature as a poet was hotly debated during his lifetime, and Mr. Bennett tries to steer a course between his one-sided detractors and his equally one-sided disciples. Against the former, he rightly affirms that George was a greatly gifted writer; against the latter, who are never tired of mentioning him in the same breath with Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe, he rightly reduces him to a lesser stature. For there is something fundamentally inhuman about George's work that prevents it from reaching the very first rank, or even from being very attractive to a reader who approaches it from outside the special cultural situation in which it was created.

George's pretensions are not redeemed by any suffering, as with Baudelaire and Rimbaud; certainly not by charm and a sense of humor, as with Mallarmé; nor yet by the deep human comprehension of Yeats or the compassion of Rilke. His feelings were too special to be widely shared, and he made no effort, as did Proust and Gide, to use their troubled complexity as a source of new insights. George preserved his aloofness and remoteness from the rest of mankind with true German thoroughness; and the result is that his work, despite its grandiose attitudes, lacks the touch of plebeian universality that is a necessary ingredient of all true literary grandeur. For most readers, it is impossible to do more than admire his polished perfection qualifiedly from a distance. Once his immediate circle of disciples has gone, Mr. Bennett believes, the aura of grandeur they have built around him will be hard to preserve. The truth is that, despite their continuing efforts, it has already begun to evaporate.

Joseph Frank

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